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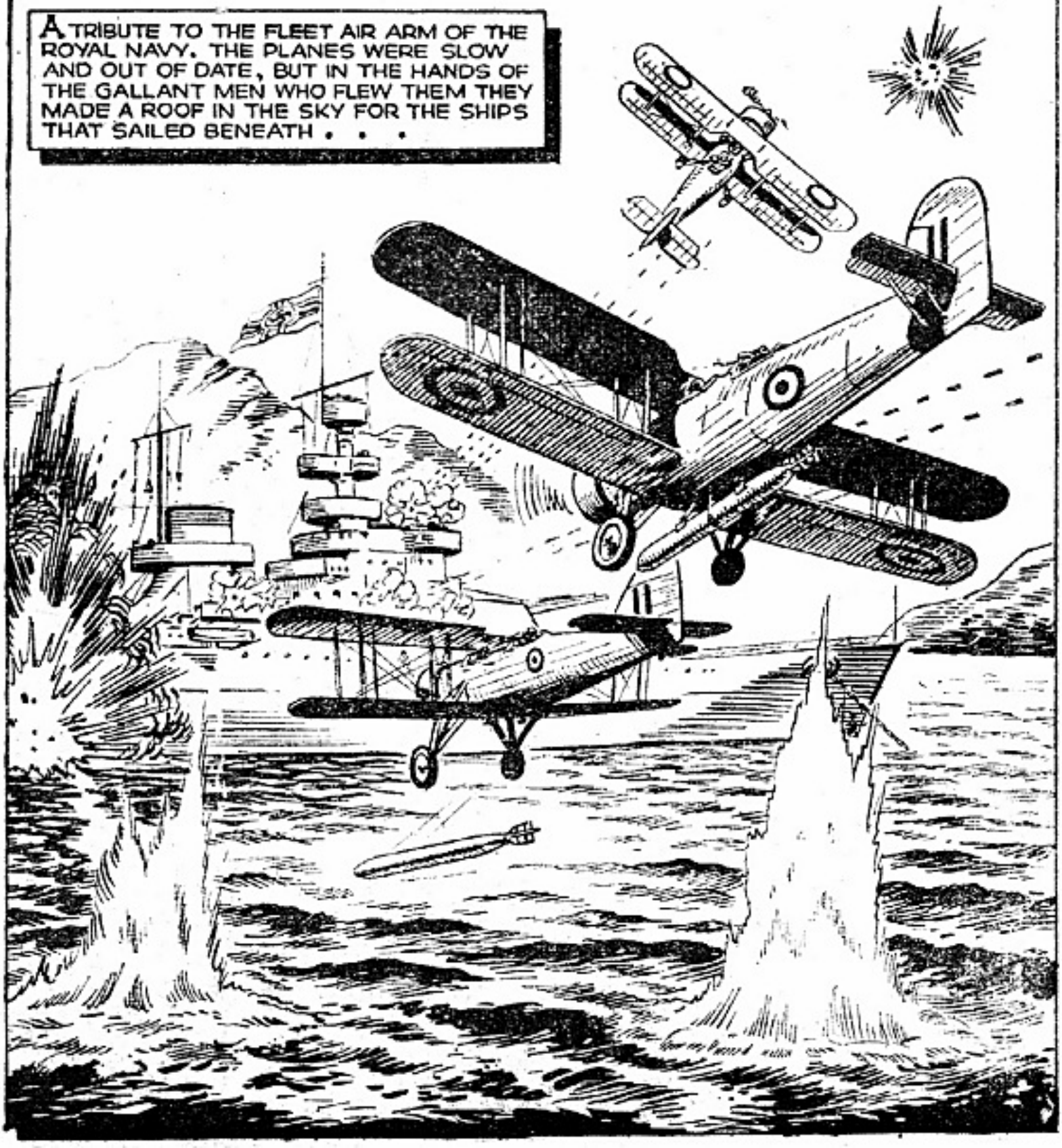
WINGS OVER THE NAVY

A TRIBUTE TO THE FLEET AIR ARM OF THE ROYAL NAVY. THE PLANES WERE SLOW AND OUT OF DATE, BUT IN THE HANDS OF THE GALLANT MEN WHO FLEW THEM THEY MADE A ROOF IN THE SKY FOR THE SHIPS THAT SAILED BENEATH . . .



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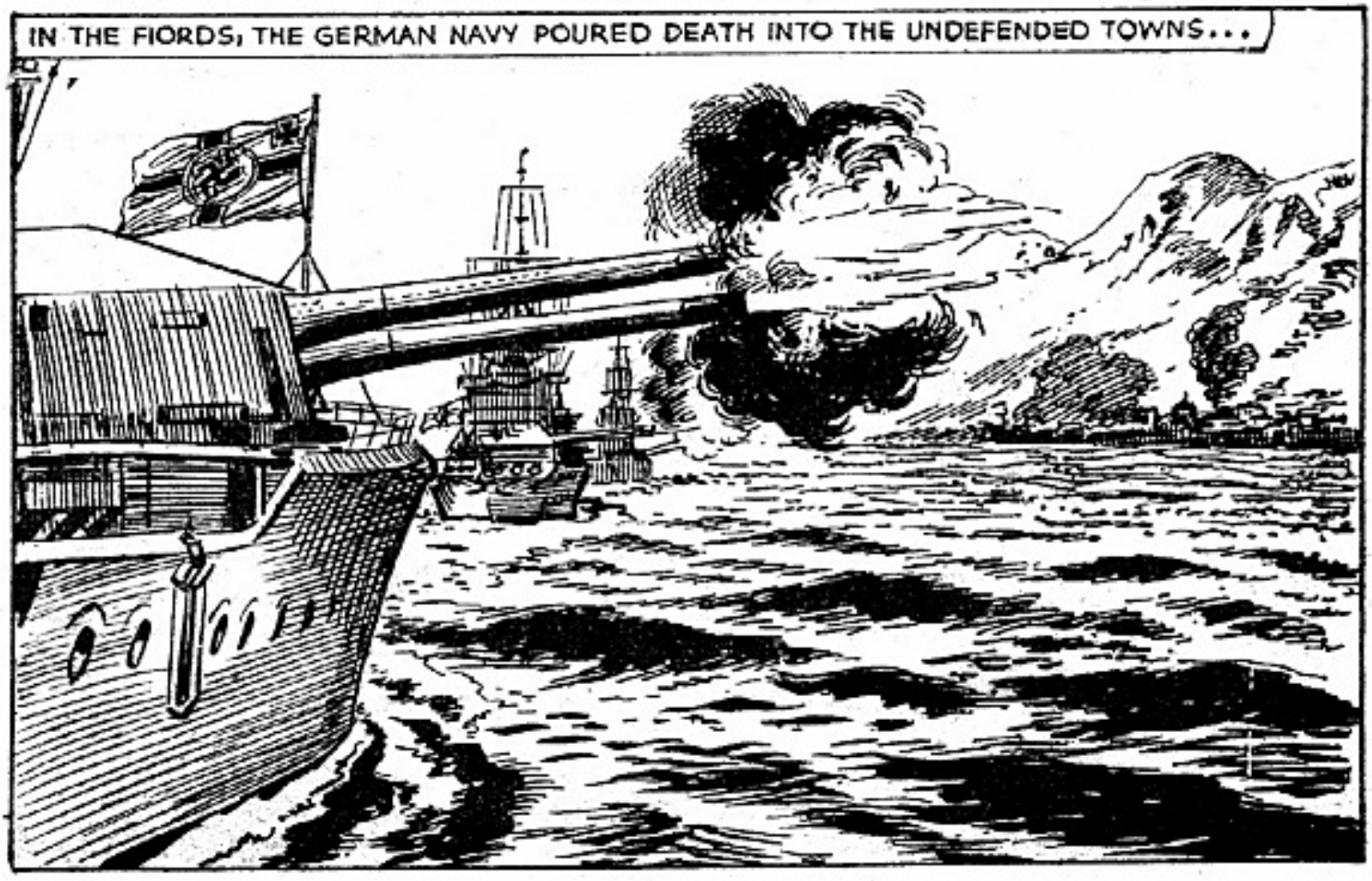
Chapter 1. DESTINATION NORWAY

IN THE MOUNTAINS, THE NORWEGIAN PATRIOTS FOUGHT WITH HEROIC BUT HOPELESS DEFIANCE . . .
LET US DIE ON OUR FEET, COMRADES! THE GERMAN INVADERS SHALL NOT PASS!


IN THE FIORDS, THE GERMAN NAVY POURED DEATH INTO THE UNDEFENDED TOWNS . . .

BUT NORWAY WAS NOT TO FIGHT ALONE. HARD-PRESSED AS SHE WAS, BRITAIN HURRIEDLY PREPARED TO SEND HELP. THE EAST COAST DOCKYARD OF ROSYTH HUMMED WITH EMBARKING TROOPS.

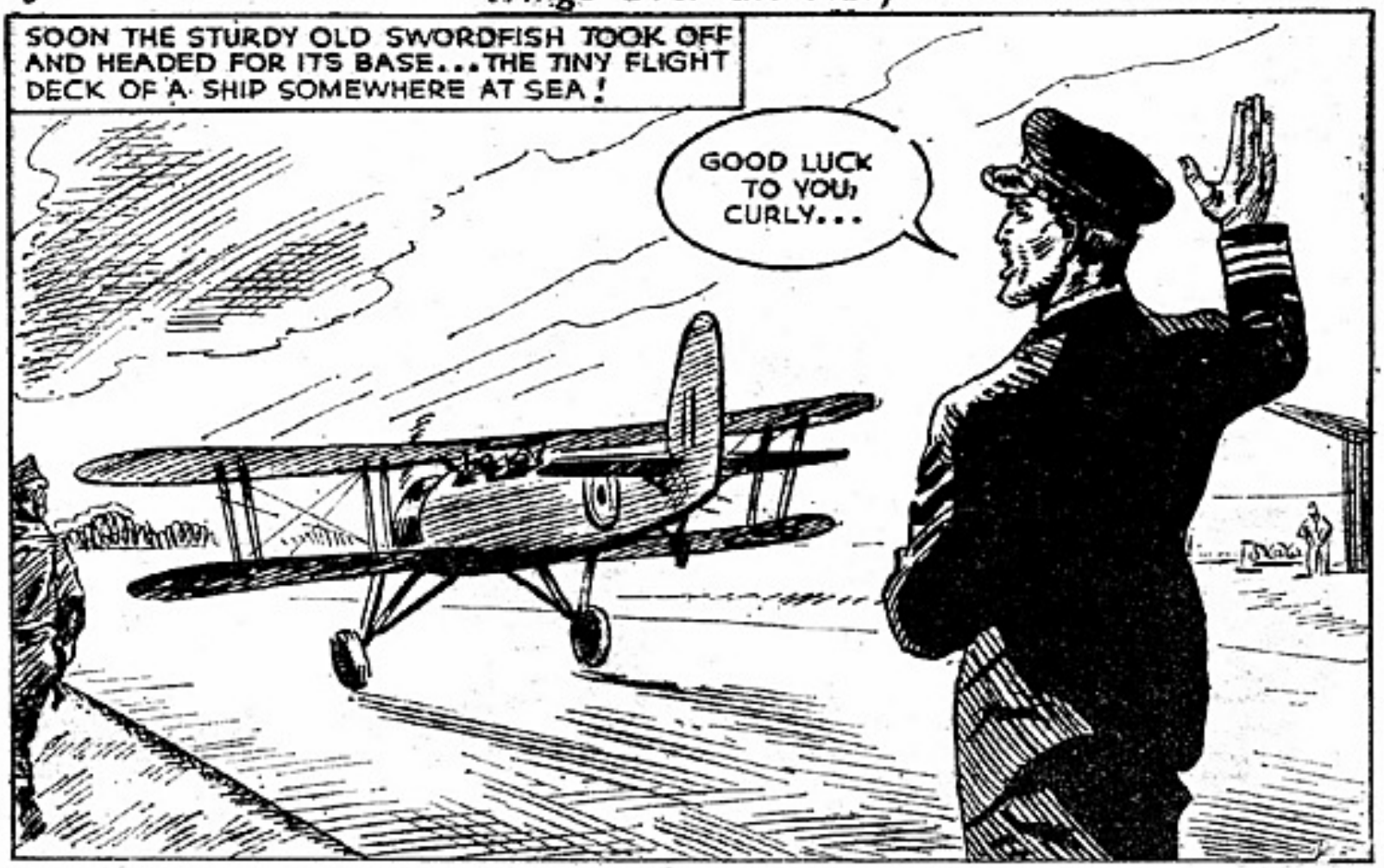
WITH THE TROOPS AND GUNS, A SQUADRON OF HURRICANES... ALL THAT COULD BE SPARED ...WAS TAKEN ABOARD THE FLEET CARRIER H.M.S. HAWK. IT WAS PLANNED TO OPERATE THE R.A.F. FIGHTERS FROM AN AIRFIELD NEAR NARVIK.

I HOPE YOU'LL BE CAREFUL WITH MY HURRICANES, CAPTAIN! IT'LL BE THEM AGAINST THE ENTIRE GERMAN AIR FORCE WHEN WE GET TO NARVIK!

THERE'LL BE ONE OR TWO OF MY SWORDFISH AROUND, TOO, GROUP CAPTAIN!

GROUP CAPTAIN WEBLY, COMMANDING THE HURRICANE SQUADRON, WAS TOO ENGROSSED TO HEAR THE IRONY IN THE VOICE OF CAPTAIN RIVERS, ONCE A PILOT IN THE OLD ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE, NOW IN COMMAND OF THE HAWK.
SIGNAL FROM LEITH, SIR. THE COMMANDER REPORTS THAT SUB-LIEUTENANT KNIGHT'S SWORDFISH HAS A MECHANICAL DEFECT. HE'LL BE TAKING OFF TO JOIN US IN THREE HOUR'S TIME, SIR.
WE SAIL IN ONE HOUR, LIEUTENANT. TELL LEITH THAT KNIGHT CAN JOIN US AT SEA. GIVE HIM AN APPROXIMATE POSITION. I HOPE THE YOUNG CUB'S LEARNT ENOUGH AT THAT FLYING SCHOOL TO LAND IN HALF A GALE!

THE INSTRUCTOR WHO HAD TAUGHT SUB-LIEUTENANT KNIGHT TO FLY WAS ANXIOUS ABOUT HIS NEWLY-FLEDGED PUPIL ON HIS FIRST OPERATIONAL FLIGHT. HE STOOD BY THE SWORDFISH ON THE WINDY AIRFIELD NEAR LEITH...
YOU'VE GOT THE HAWK'S POSITION, CURLY! I HOPE YOU FIND HER ALL RIGHT! THEY NEED THAT STRINGBAG YOU'RE FLYING!
THEY NEED SAM AND ME, TOO, COMMANDER! SOMEBODY'S GOT TO WIN THE WAR!


SOON THE STURDY OLD SWORDFISH TOOK OFF AND HEADED FOR ITS BASE...THE TINY FLIGHT DECK OF A SHIP SOMEWHERE AT SEA!
GOOD LUCK TO YOU, CURLY...

CURLY KNIGHT HAD PASSED OUT AS A FLEET AIR ARM PILOT ONLY TWO WEEKS BEFORE. THE HAWK WAS HIS FIRST POSTING...AND HE WAS MORE THAN READY FOR IT!
THIS IS WHAT I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR, SAM... MY OWN PLANE AND A CHANCE TO FIGHT!
AYE, SIR. HAPPEN WE'D BETTER FIND THE HAWK FIRST, THOUGH!

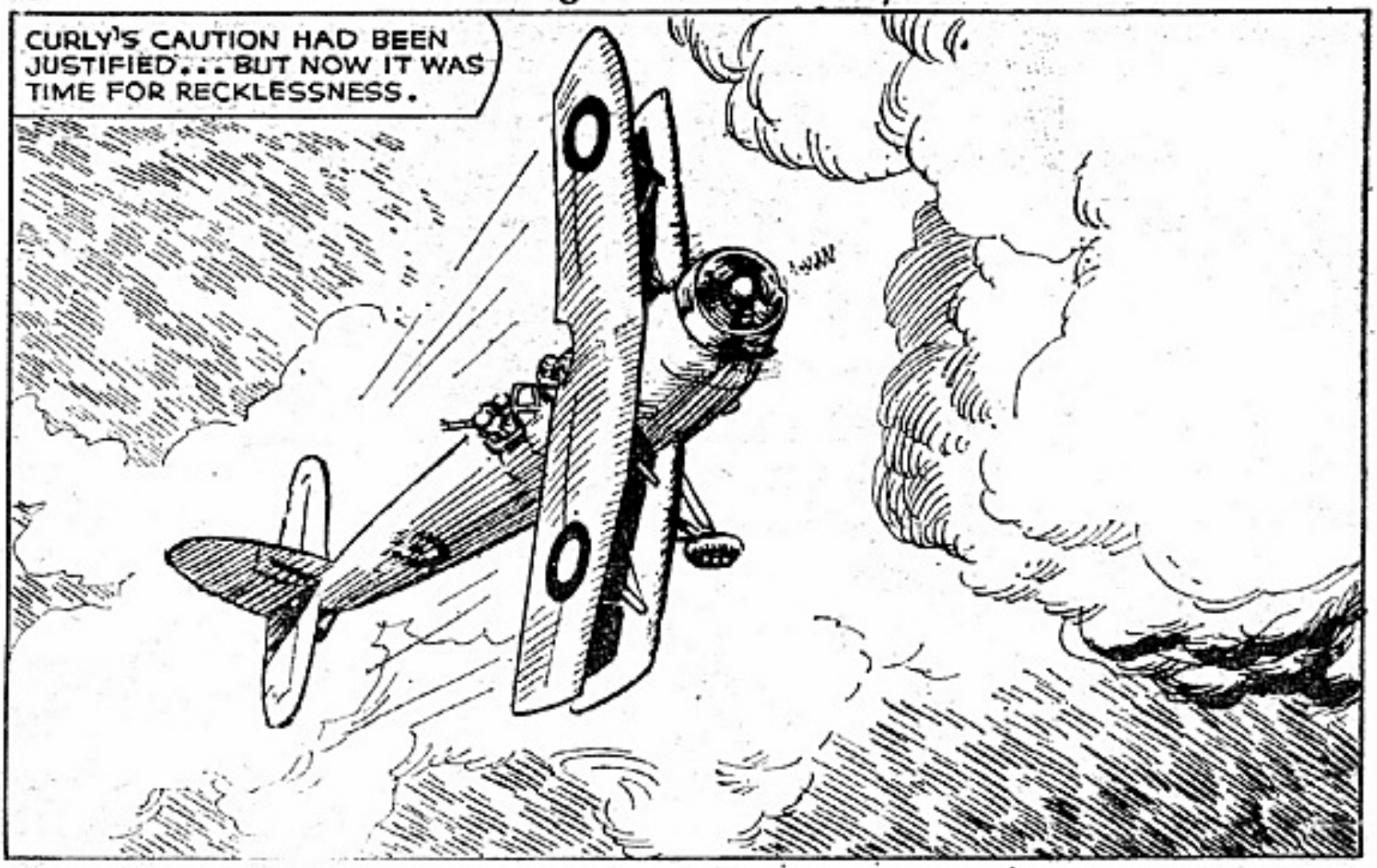
PETTY OFFICER SAM BLAKE, ALSO NEWLY-TRAINED, WAS AN OBSERVER, AND A TOUGH YORKSHIREMAN. HE GRINNED AT CURLY AND TURNED TO HIS MAPS. AFTER THREE HOURS FLYING OVER THE EMPTY SEA...

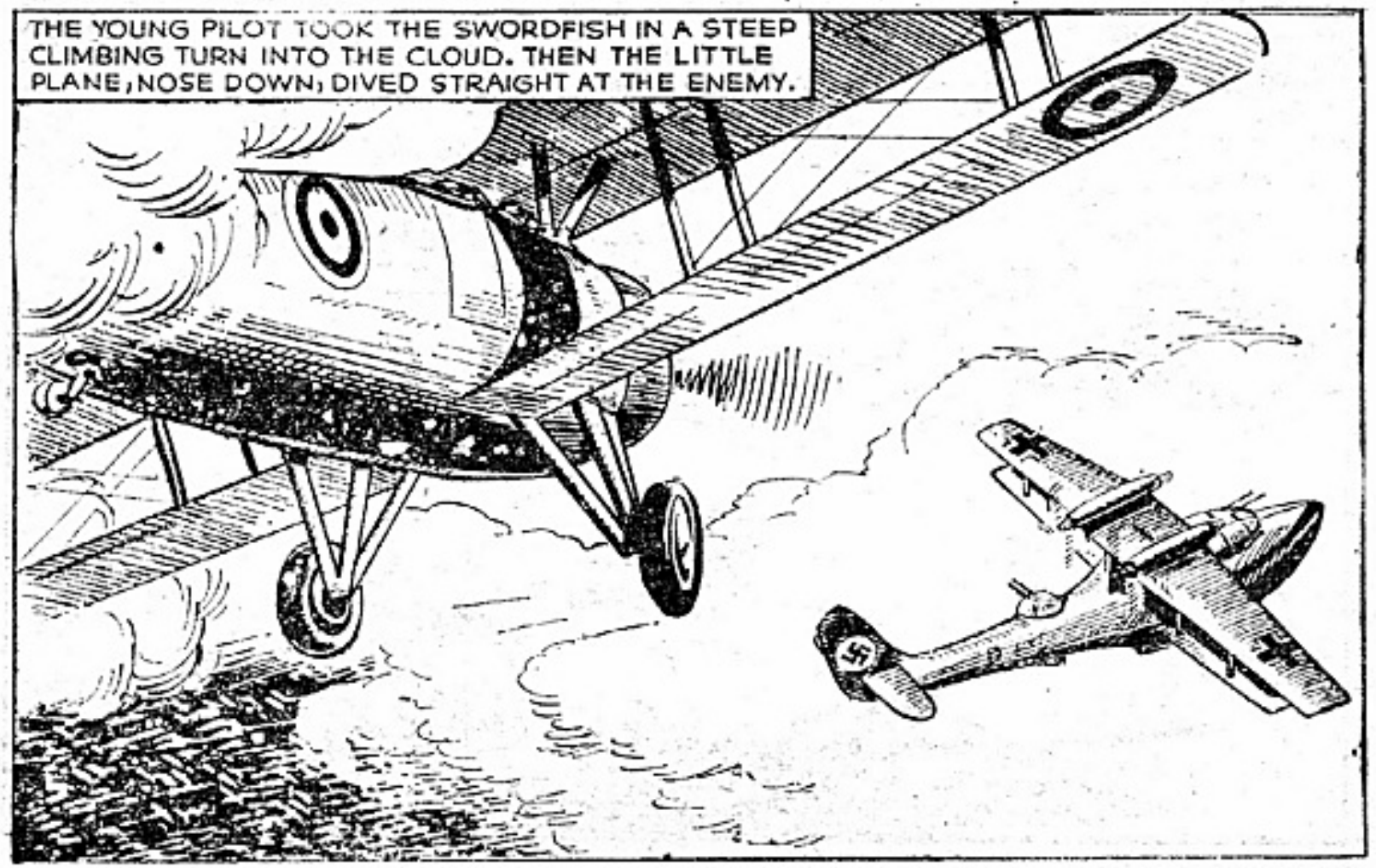
WE SHOULD BE NEAR THE HAWK BY MY RECKONING, SIR!

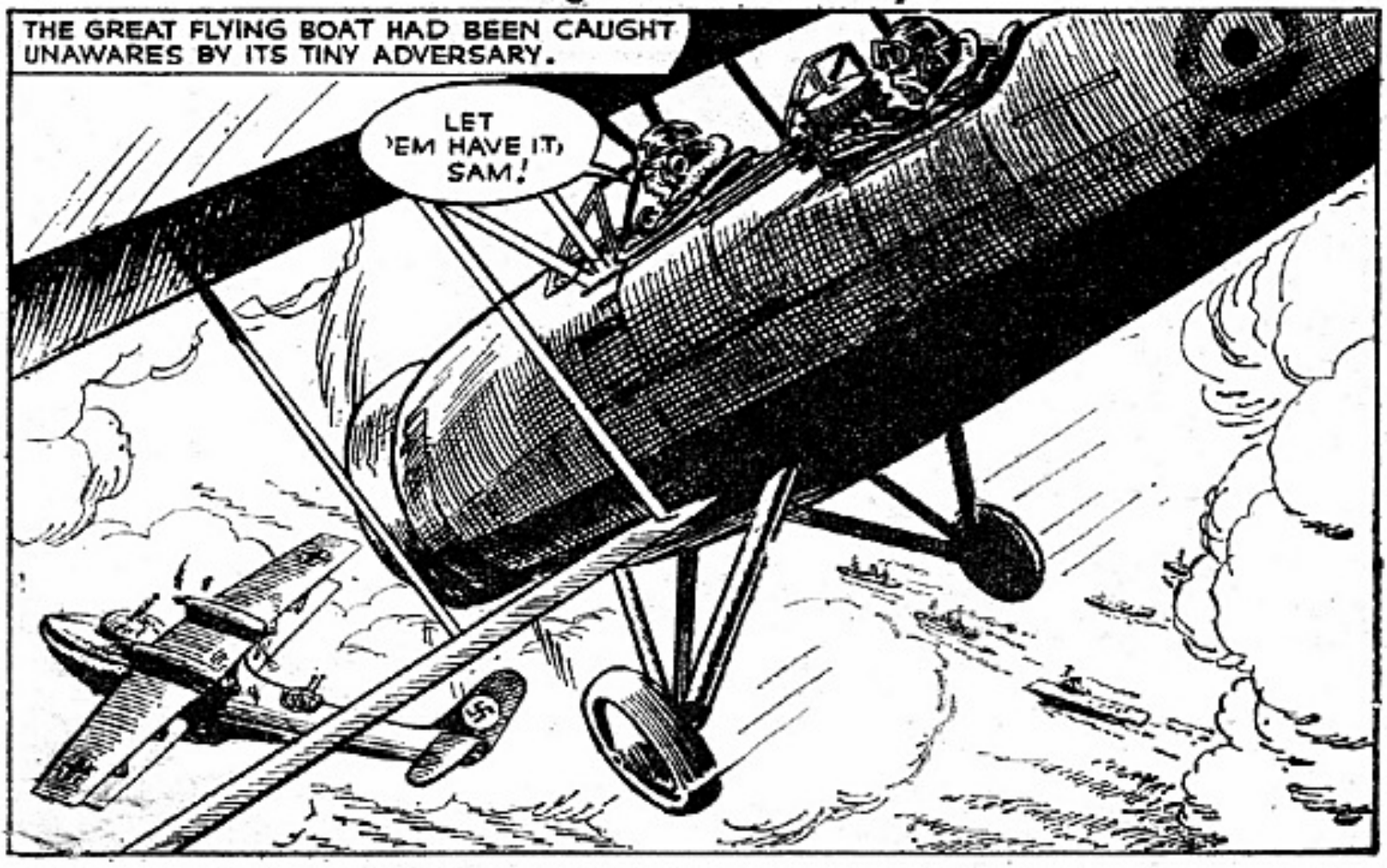
THERE'S AN AIRCRAFT AHEAD! PERHAPS SHE'S FROM THE HAWK... BUT WE WON'T TAKE ANY CHANCES!

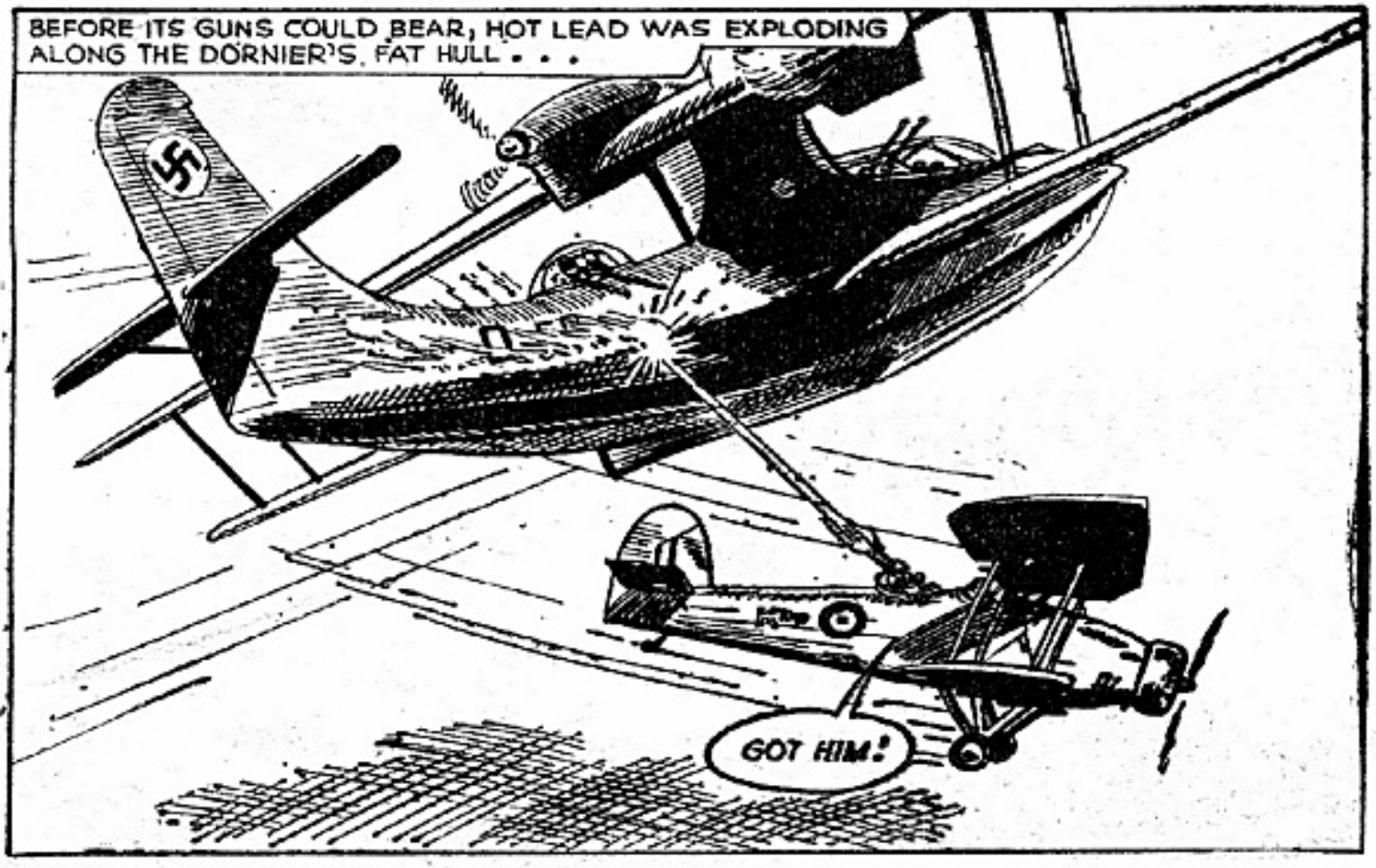
DODGING FROM CLOUD TO CLOUD, THE SWORDFISH CLOSED CAUTIOUSLY WITH THE UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT BELOW...

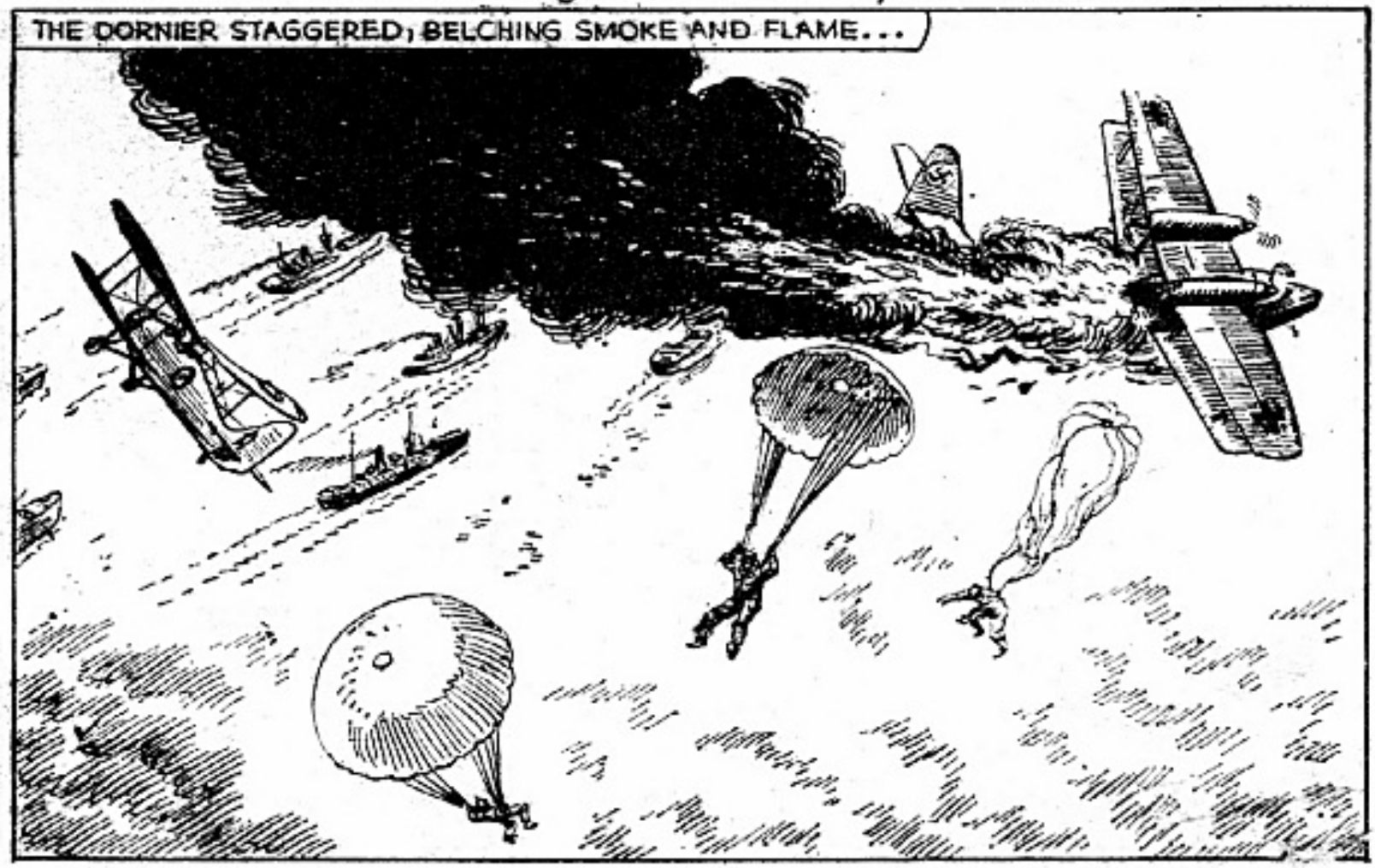
A DORNIER FLYING BOAT! IT MUST BE SHADOWING THE CONVOY! HOLD ON TO YOUR HAT, SAM!

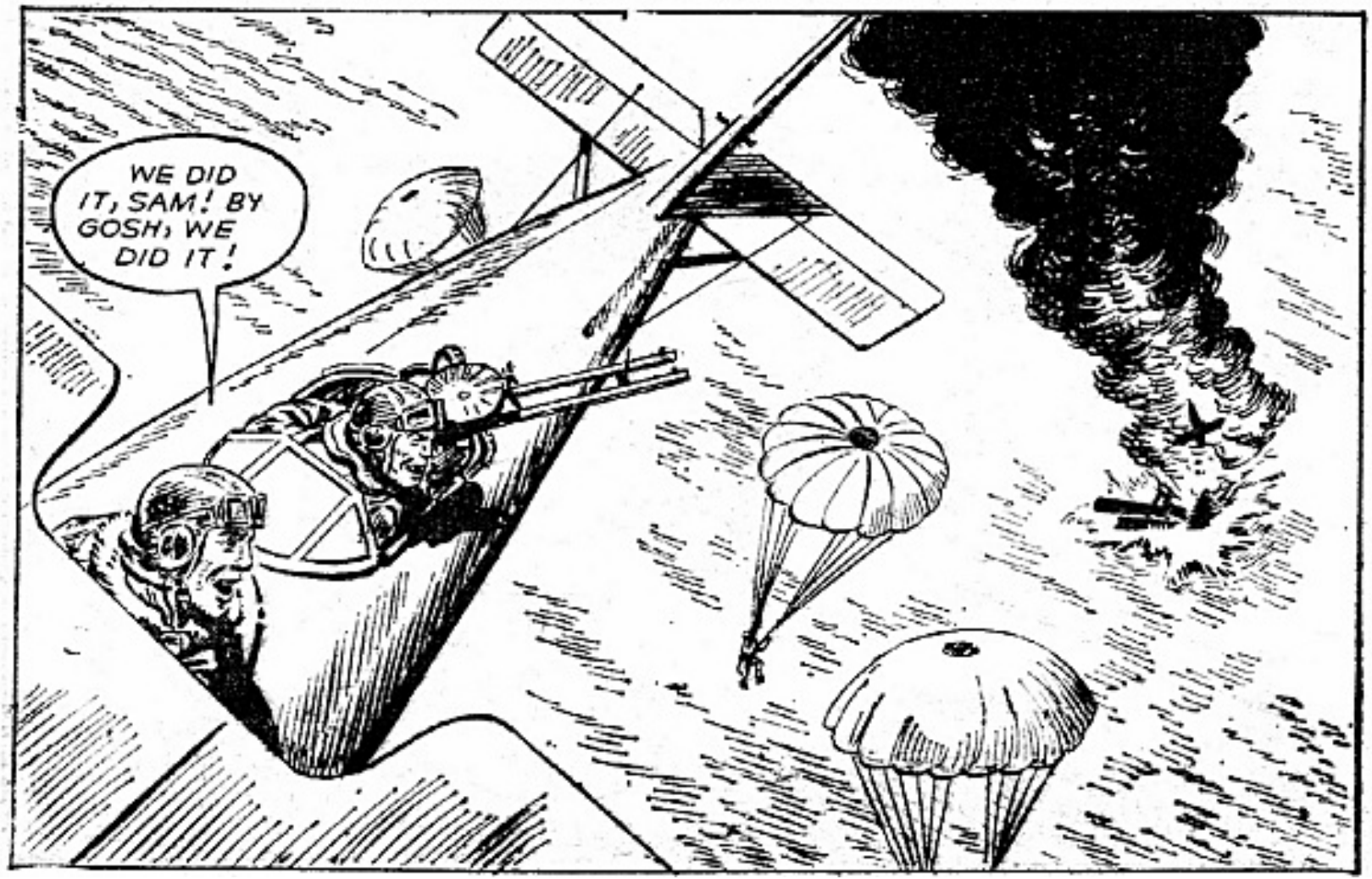

CURLY'S CAUTION HAD BEEN JUSTIFIED... BUT NOW IT WAS TIME FOR RECKLESSNESS.


THE YOUNG PILOT TOOK THE SWORDFISH IN A STEEP CLIMBING TURN INTO THE CLOUD. THEN THE LITTLE PLANE, NOSE DOWN, DIVED STRAIGHT AT THE ENEMY.

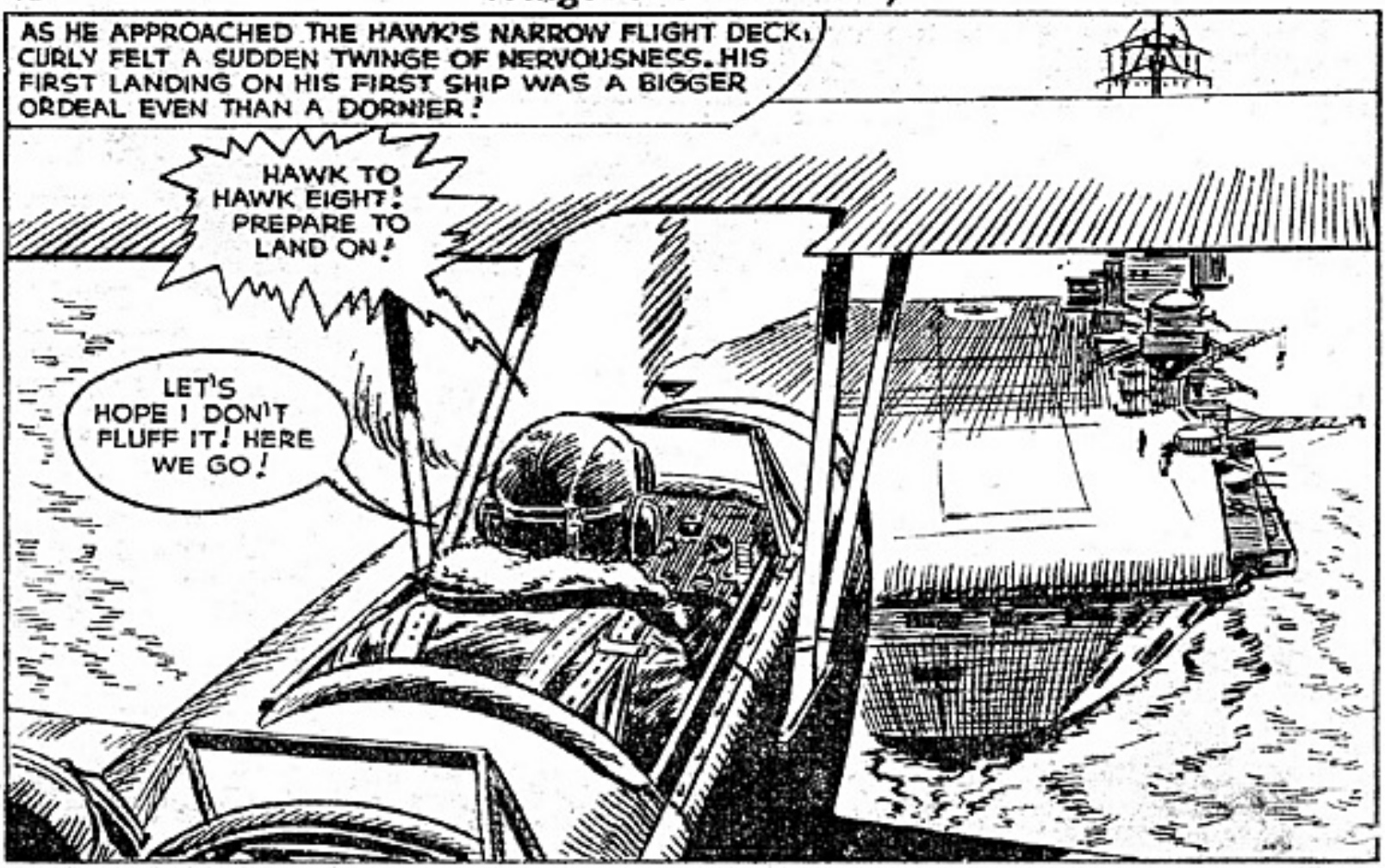

THE GREAT FLYING BOAT HAD BEEN CAUGHT UNAWARES BY ITS TINY ADVERSARY.
LET 'EM HAVE IT, SAM!

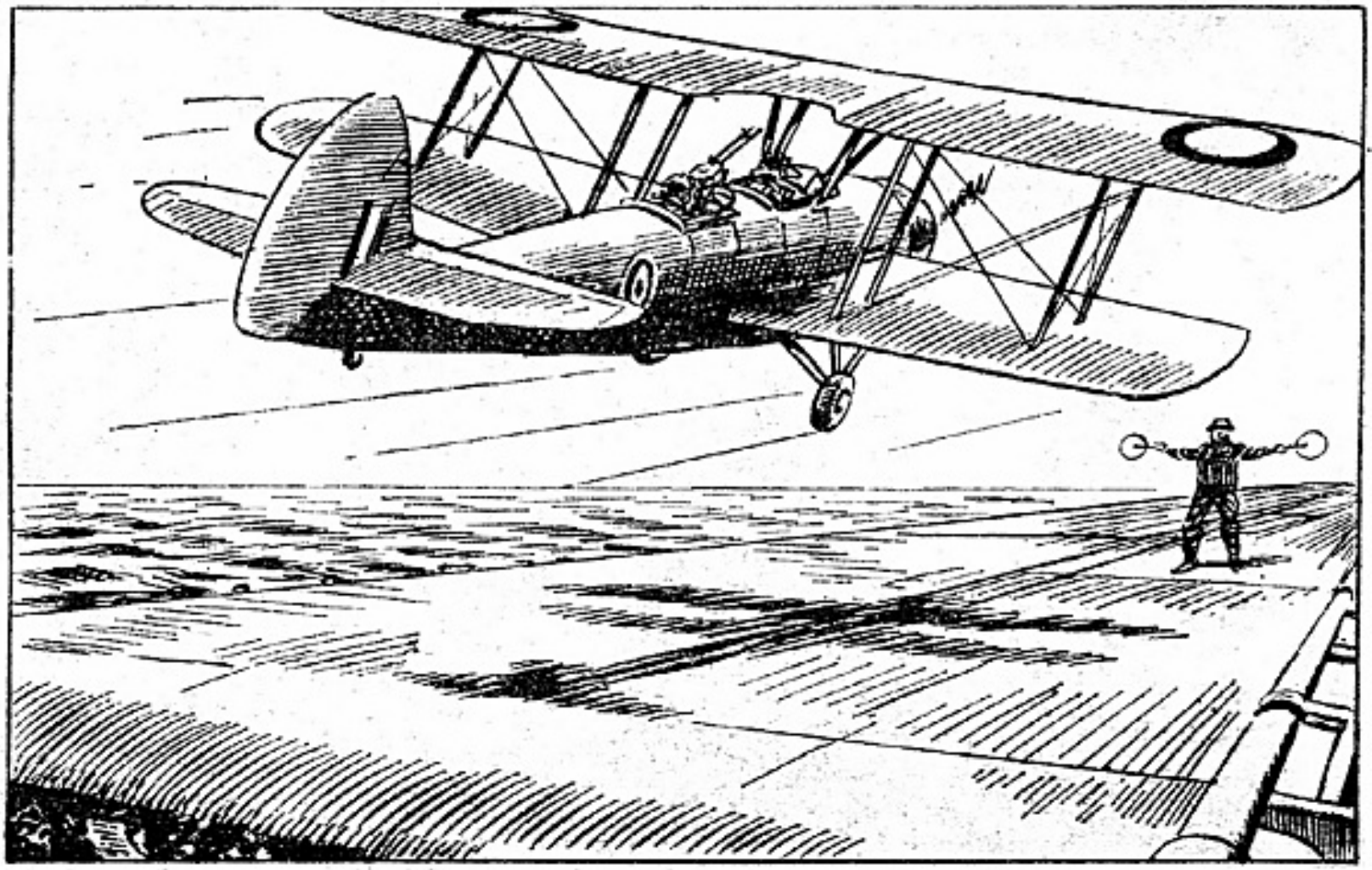

BEFORE ITS GUNS COULD BEAR, HOT LEAD WAS EXPLODING ALONG THE DORNIER'S FAT HULL . . .
GOT HIM!


THE DORNIER STAGGERED, BELCHING SMOKE AND FLAME...


WE DID IT, SAM! BY GOSH, WE DID IT!

ON THE BRIDGE OF THE HAWK, THEY SAW THE DORNIER PLUNGE HEADLONG INTO THE SEA. CAPTAIN RIVERS LOOKED UP AT THE VICTORIOUS SWORDFISH AND GRINNED...
ALTER COURSE TO TAKE THE NEW BOY ON BOARD, LIEUTENANT! HE LOOKS LIKE BEING A USEFUL ADDITION TO THE COMPLEMENT!
AYE, AYE, SIR!


AS HE APPROACHED THE HAWK'S NARROW FLIGHT DECK, CURLY FELT A SUDDEN TWINGE OF NERVOUSNESS. HIS FIRST LANDING ON HIS FIRST SHIP WAS A BIGGER ORDEAL EVEN THAN A DORNIER!
HAWK TO HAWK EIGHT! PREPARE TO LAND ON!
LET'S HOPE I DON'T FLUFF IT! HERE WE GO!



WITH A PERFECT LANDING, YOUNG LIEUTENANT KNIGHT JOINED HIS SHIP!

THERE WAS A GLINT OF PRIDE IN CAPTAIN RIVERS' EYE AS HE TURNED TO FACE HIS NEW PILOT...

LIEUTENANT KNIGHT REPORTING, SIR!

WELCOME ABOARD, KNIGHT! THAT WAS A NICE PIECE OF WORK ON THAT DORNIER! WE SHALL NEED PLENTY OF SHOOTING LIKE THAT WHERE WE'RE GOING!

WHEN CURLY HAD GONE, GROUP CAPTAIN WEBLY SMILED PATRONISINGLY.

YOU DON'T REALLY EXPECT THOSE OLD SWORDFISH OF YOURS TO BE A MATCH FOR THE LATEST JERRY FIGHTERS, DO YOU, CAPTAIN?

WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT, MISTER WEBLY! AND WE DON'T FORGET IN THE NAVY THAT IT WAS YOU CHAPS IN THE R.A.F. WHO STOPPED US DEVELOPING NEW NAVAL AIRCRAFT IN TIME FOR THIS PARTY WITH THE GERMANS!

UNTIL TWO YEARS BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR, THE FLEET AIR ARM HAD BEEN CONTROLLED BY THE R.A.F.... AND HAD BEEN THE CINDERELLA OF THE AIR FORCES. FORCED TO MAKE DO WITH OBSOLETE AIRCRAFT, THE NAVY HAD NOT FORGOTTEN...

NICE TO HAVE YOU WITH US, KNIGHT! MY NAME'S PETERS AND THIS CHAP IN THE ARMCHAIR IS GRIMM. WE'RE GREEN WITH ENVY AT YOUR BAGGING THAT DORNIER!

OH, IT WAS JUST LUCK!

THERE WAS BITTERNESS ON THE BRIDGE OF THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER... AND IN THE OFFICERS' MESS...

I'LL SAY IT WAS LUCK! THOSE JERRIES MUST HAVE BEEN ASLEEP TO GET PRANGED BY AN OLD RATTLETRAP LIKE A SWORDFISH!

NO OFFENCE TO YOU, KNIGHT! PERSONALLY, I THINK YOU FELLOWS ARE HEROES EVEN TO GO UP IN KITES TIED TOGETHER WITH STRING!

STUNG TO ANGER, CURLY TURNED ON THE R.A.F. PILOTS WHOSE HURRICANES THE HAWK WAS FERRYING TO NORWAY...
YOU TWO CAN PIPE DOWN! EVEN IF WE DO CALL IT THE "STRINGBAG", WE'RE NOT GOING TO LET THE R.A.F. SNEER AT OUR SWORDFISH! SHE'S A DARNED FINE AIRCRAFT!

CURLY'S FIERCE PRIDE IN HIS SERVICE AND ITS AIRCRAFT, OLD AS THEY WERE, WAS NOT SHARED BY ALL HIS NEW SHIPMATES...
COME OFF IT, KNIGHT! SHE'S A BROKEN-DOWN OLD MUSEUM PIECE, AND WE ALL KNOW IT! IF I'D KNOWN I WAS GOING TO FLY SWORDFISH, I WOULDN'T HAVE JOINED THE NAVY!
I'M GOING ON DECK, PETERS, BEFORE I LOSE MY TEMPER!

DISGUSTED BY GRIMM'S REMARKS, THE TWO YOUNG NAVAL AIRMEN WENT ON DECK. THERE AS HE SURVEYED ONE OF THE FLEET AIR ARM AIRCRAFT, EVEN CURLY'S PRIDE WILTED FOR A MOMENT...
I SUPPOSE THE STRINGBAG IS A BIT ANCIENT COMPARED WITH THESE BEAUTIES OF THE R.A.F.
NEVER MIND! WE'LL SHOW THE JERRIES SHE'S GOT A STING IN HER STILL!

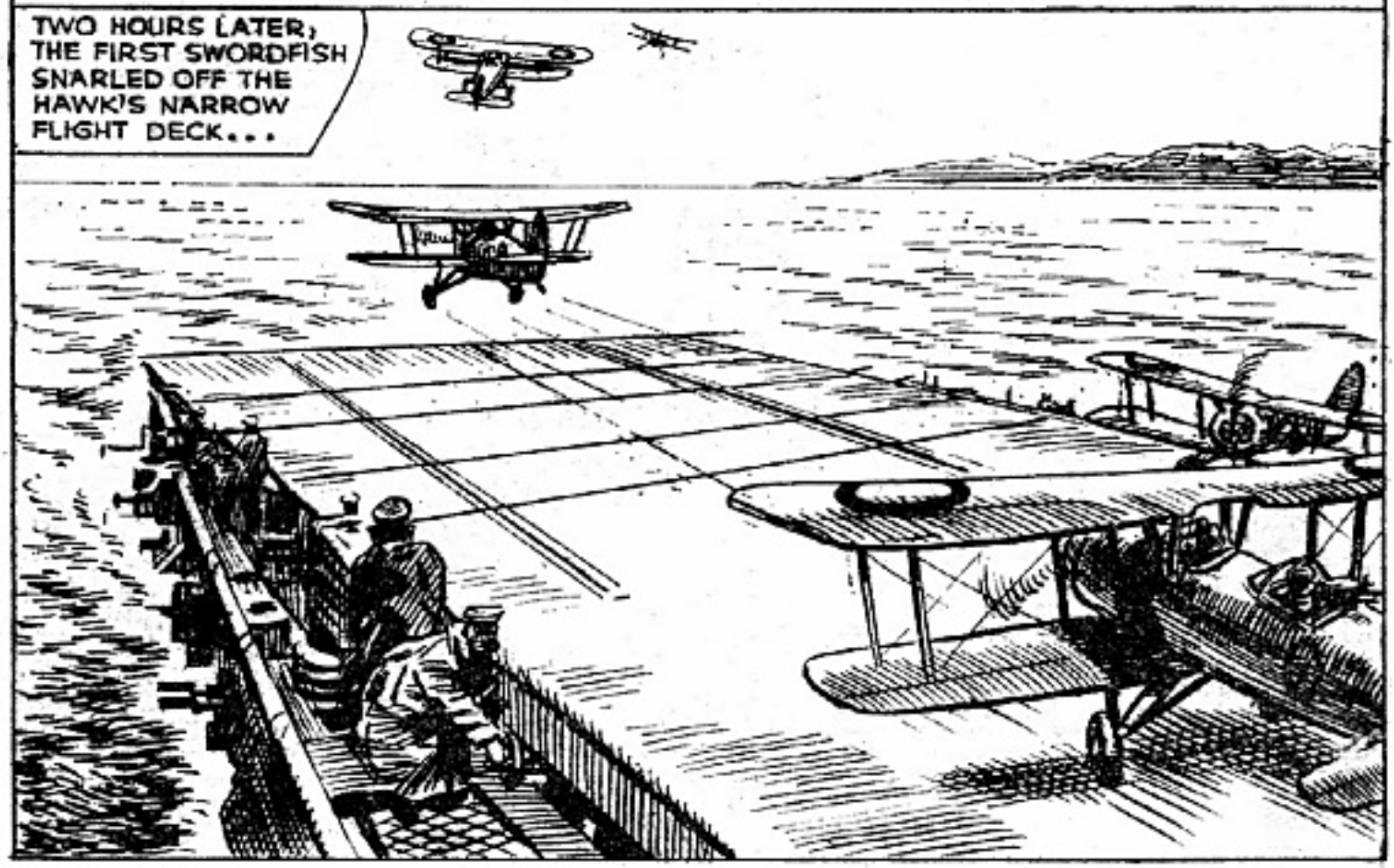
BUT CURLY'S DEPRESSION SOON PASSED. HE WAS IN HIGH SPIRITS AT THE PROSPECT OF ACTION AS THE CONVOY SAILED TOWARDS NARVIK...
BRITISH TROOPS, GUNS AND AIRCRAFT POURED ON TO THE JETTY. AT LEAST NORWAY WOULD NOT BE ENGULFED BY THE INVADING GERMANS WITHOUT A BITTER RESISTANCE...
THEY'RE DECENT CHAPS REALLY, THOSE R.A.F. TYPES! THEY'VE GOT A TOUGH JOB ON HERE, TOO, CURLY!
I KNOW, PETE! GOOD LUCK TO THEM!

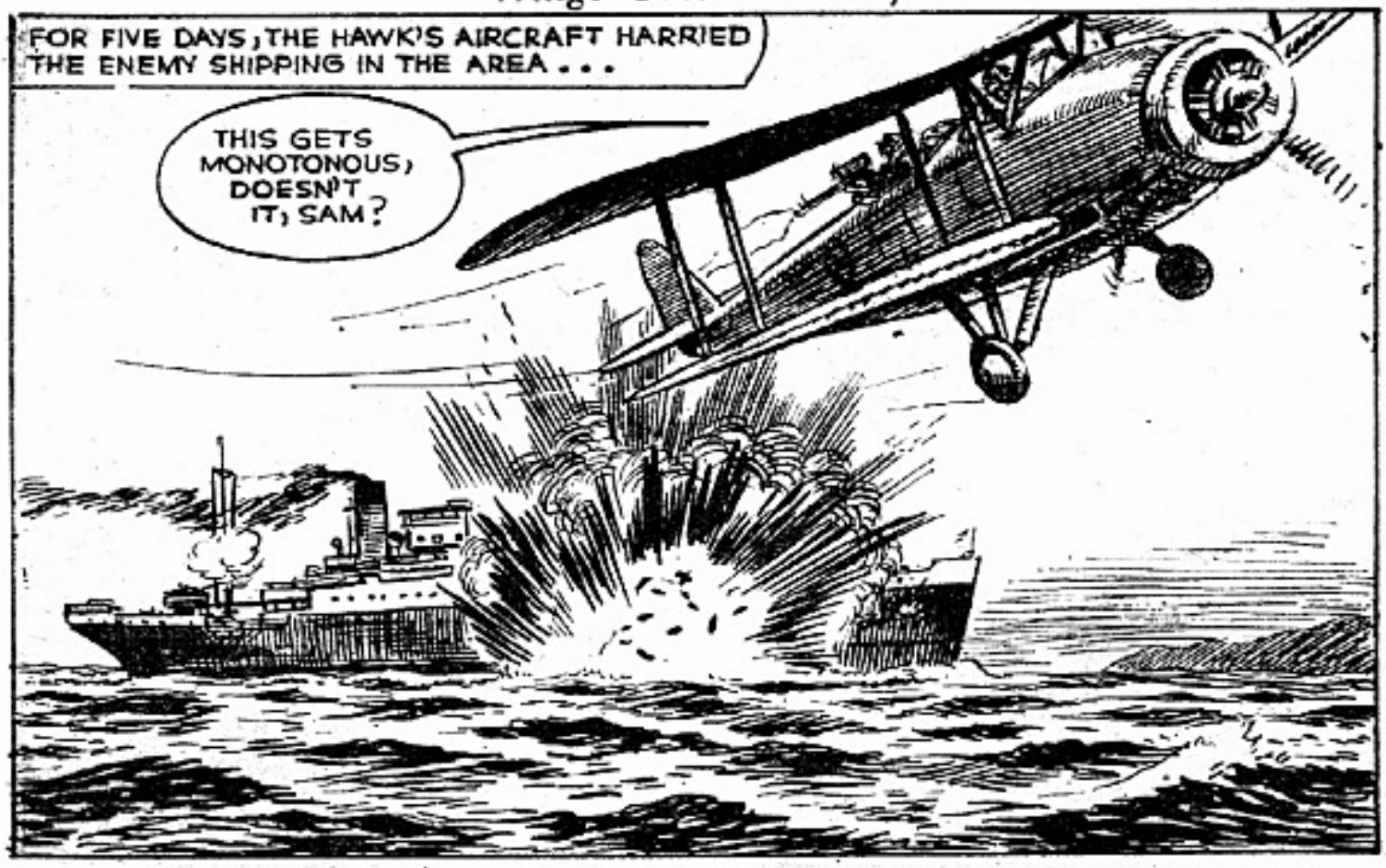
THE TWO SENIOR OFFICERS SHOOK HANDS WITH A MUTUAL RESPECT... AND A CERTAIN HOSTILITY.
WELL, THANKS FOR THE LIFT, CAPTAIN!
GOOD LUCK, WEBLY! WE'VE BEEN DETAILED TO FLY SORTIES DOWN THE COAST, SO WE MAY BE ABLE TO GIVE YOUR BOYS A LITTLE HELP SOME TIME!

TWELVE HOURS LATER, HER CONVOY DUTY OVER, THE HAWK SAILED SOUTH TOWARDS THE BATTLE AREA...

IN THE HAWK'S OPERATIONS ROOM, CAPTAIN RIVERS TALKED GRIMLY TO HIS PILOTS.
OUR JOB IS TO STRAFE COASTWISE SHIPPING IN THESE WATERS. THE JERRIES ARE SENDING SUPPLIES TO THEIR TROOPS BY SEA FROM HOLLAND AND DENMARK, SO THERE'LL BE PLENTY OF TARGETS! LEAVE THE LAND TARGETS TO THE RAFF TYPES... AND RETURN FROM PATROL BEFORE YOUR TANKS ARE EMPTY! THAT'S ALL!

Chapter 2. A HORNET'S NEST




FOR FIVE DAYS, THE HAWK'S AIRCRAFT HARRIED THE ENEMY SHIPPING IN THE AREA . . .
THIS GETS MONOTONOUS, DOESN'T IT, SAM?

SHOOTING UP SMALL GERMAN COASTERS HAD BEGUN TO PALL ON CURLY KNIGHT...
SHE'S GOING DOWN, SIR!
FORGET IT, SAM! THERE'S A PLANE AHEAD... AND A JERRY TOO, BY THE LOOK OF IT!

THE SMALL GERMAN AIRCRAFT WAS HEADING INLAND...
LOOKS LIKE AN ARMY SPOTTER! MAYBE A JERRY STAFF OFFICER HAVING A DAY OFF AT THE SEA! LET'S GO GET HIM, SAM!

SAM LOOKED UNEASILY AT THE APPROACHING COASTLINE AND REMONSTRATED WITH THE EXCITED YOUNG PILOT...
ORDERS ARE TO KEEP OFF THE COAST, SIR! THAT JERRY'S HEADING INLAND, AND WE'RE NOT MUCH FASTER THAN HE IS! IT'LL TAKE US A GOOD FIFTY MILES TO CATCH HIM!
THOSE RAFF BODS CAN SPARE US JUST ONE LITTLE JERRY, SAM! BESIDES, WE SAW HIM FIRST!

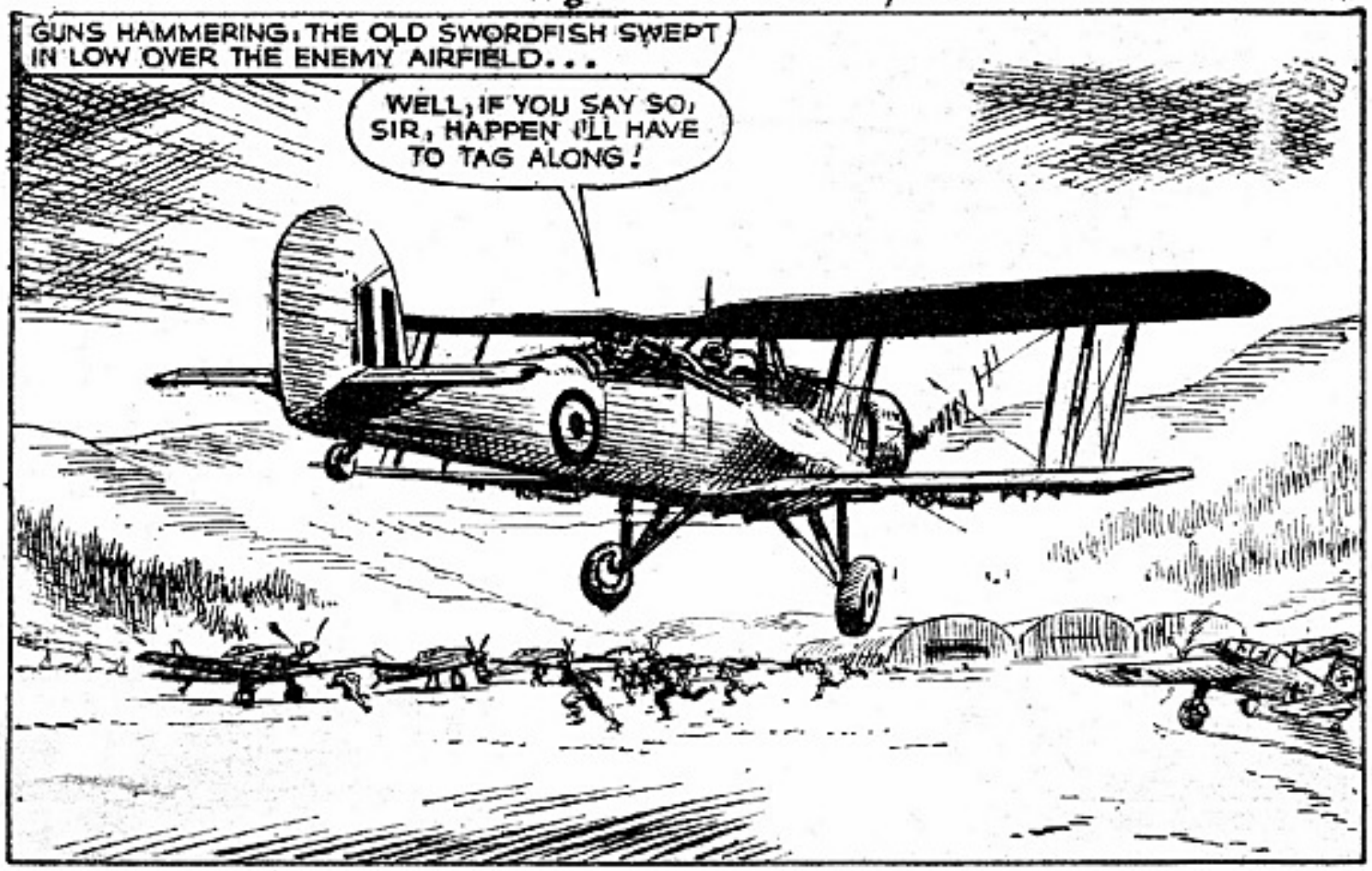
DEAF TO SAM'S WARNING, CURLY SET OFF LIGHTHEARTEDLY IN PURSUIT OF THE GERMAN SPOTTER AIRCRAFT. SOON THEY WERE FLYING OVER THE SNOW-COVERED LAND...

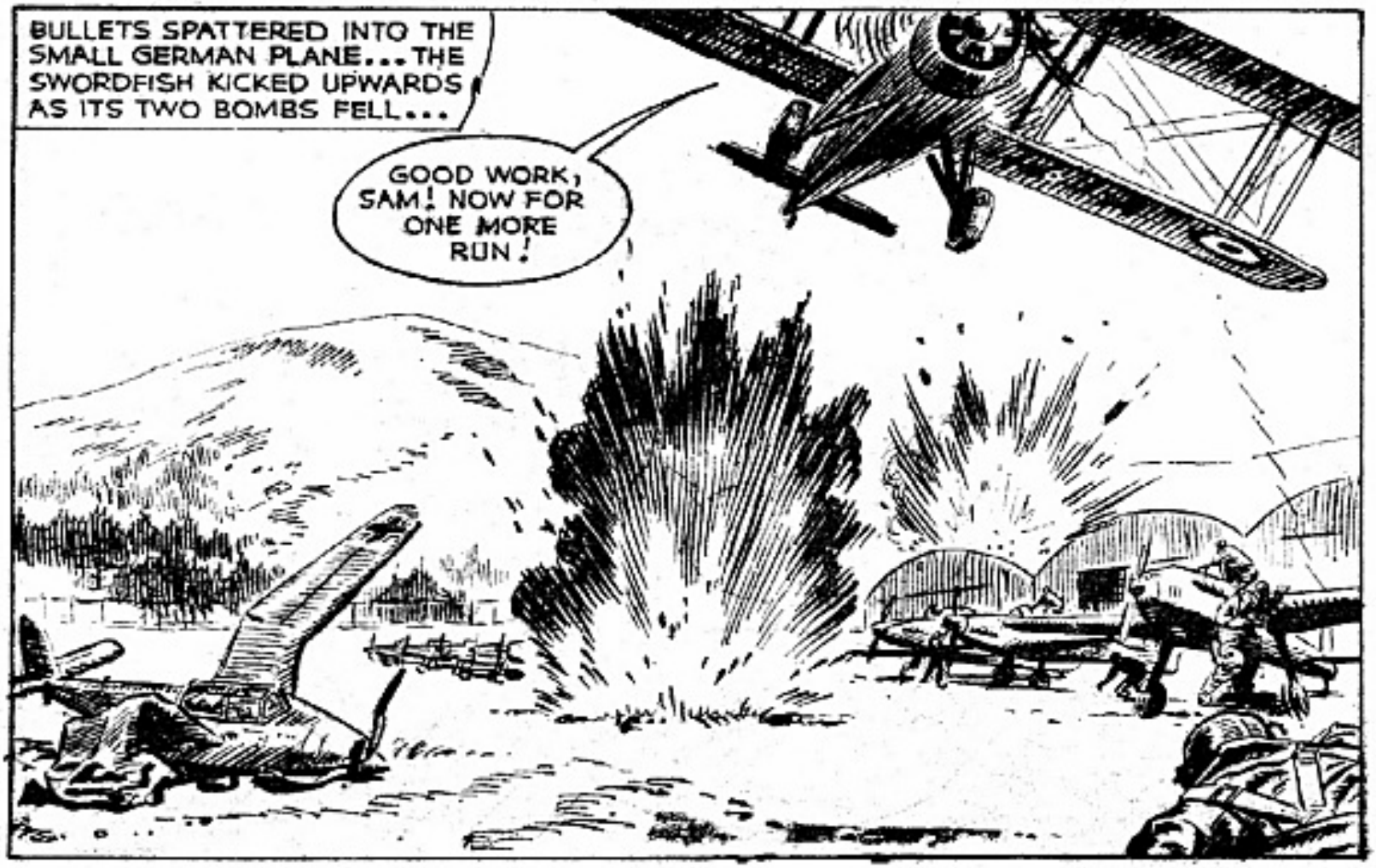
FOR TEN MINUTES, THE GERMAN PLANE FLED INLAND, WITH THE SWORDFISH GAINING ON IT SLOWLY. IT WAS ALMOST IN RANGE OF SAM'S GUNS, WHEN...

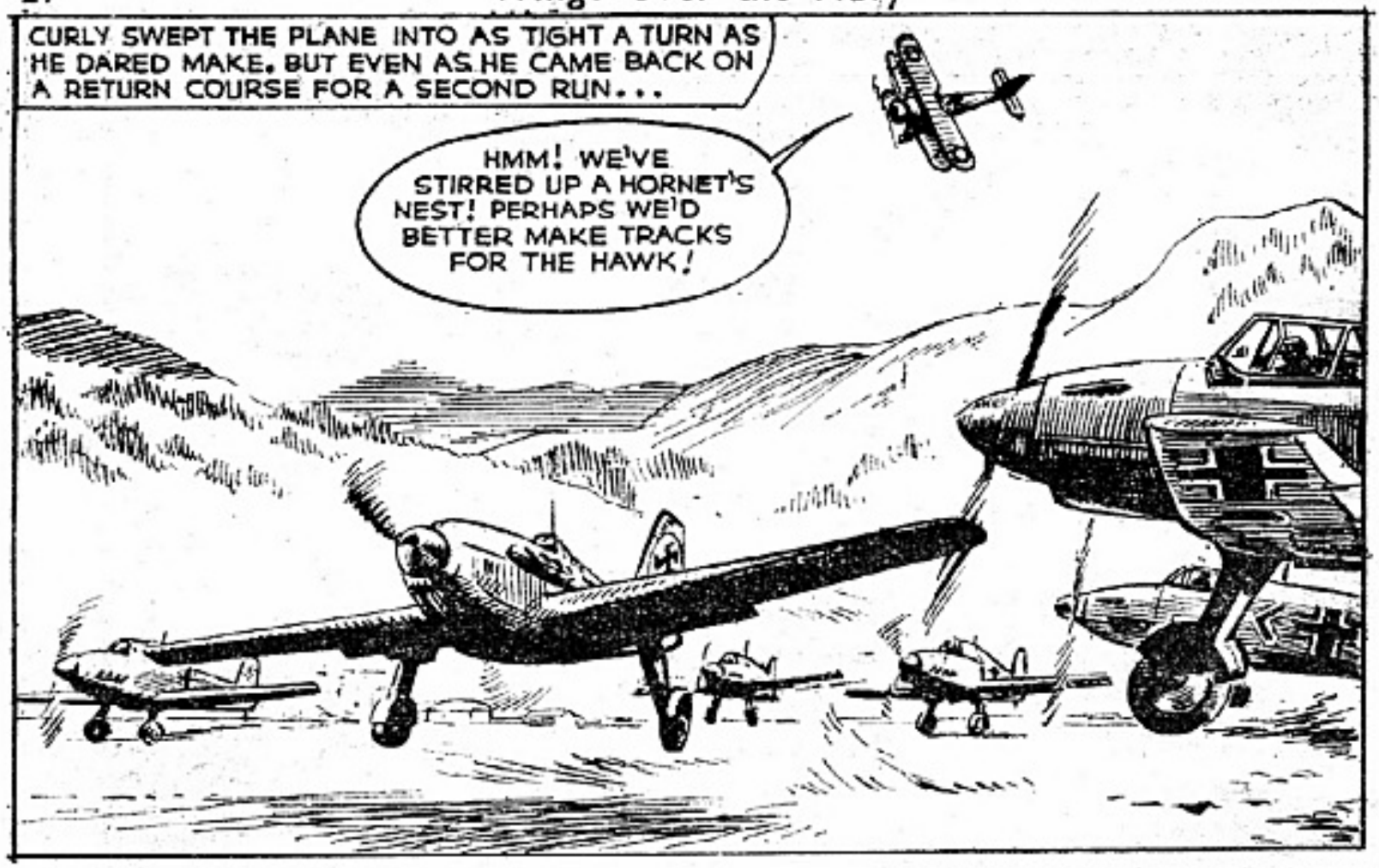
HALLO, WHAT'S JERRY UP TO? HE'S NOT GOING TO TRY TO LAND, IS HE?

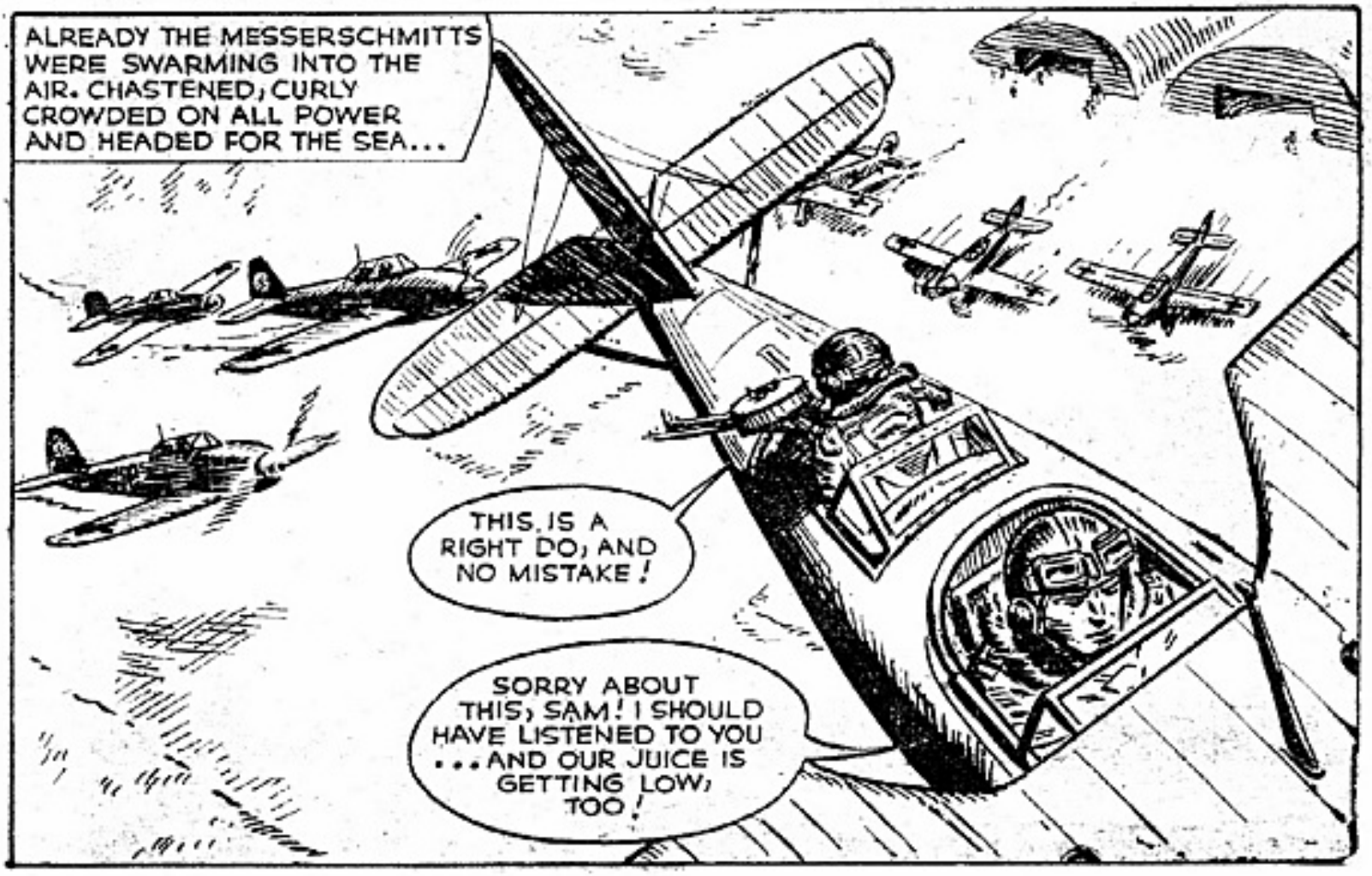
AS THE SWORDFISH CLEARED THE HILL, THE ASTONISHED CURLY BANKED SHARPLY...
WELL, I'LL BE JIGGERED, A JERRY AIRFIELD! WHAT A TARGET, SAM!

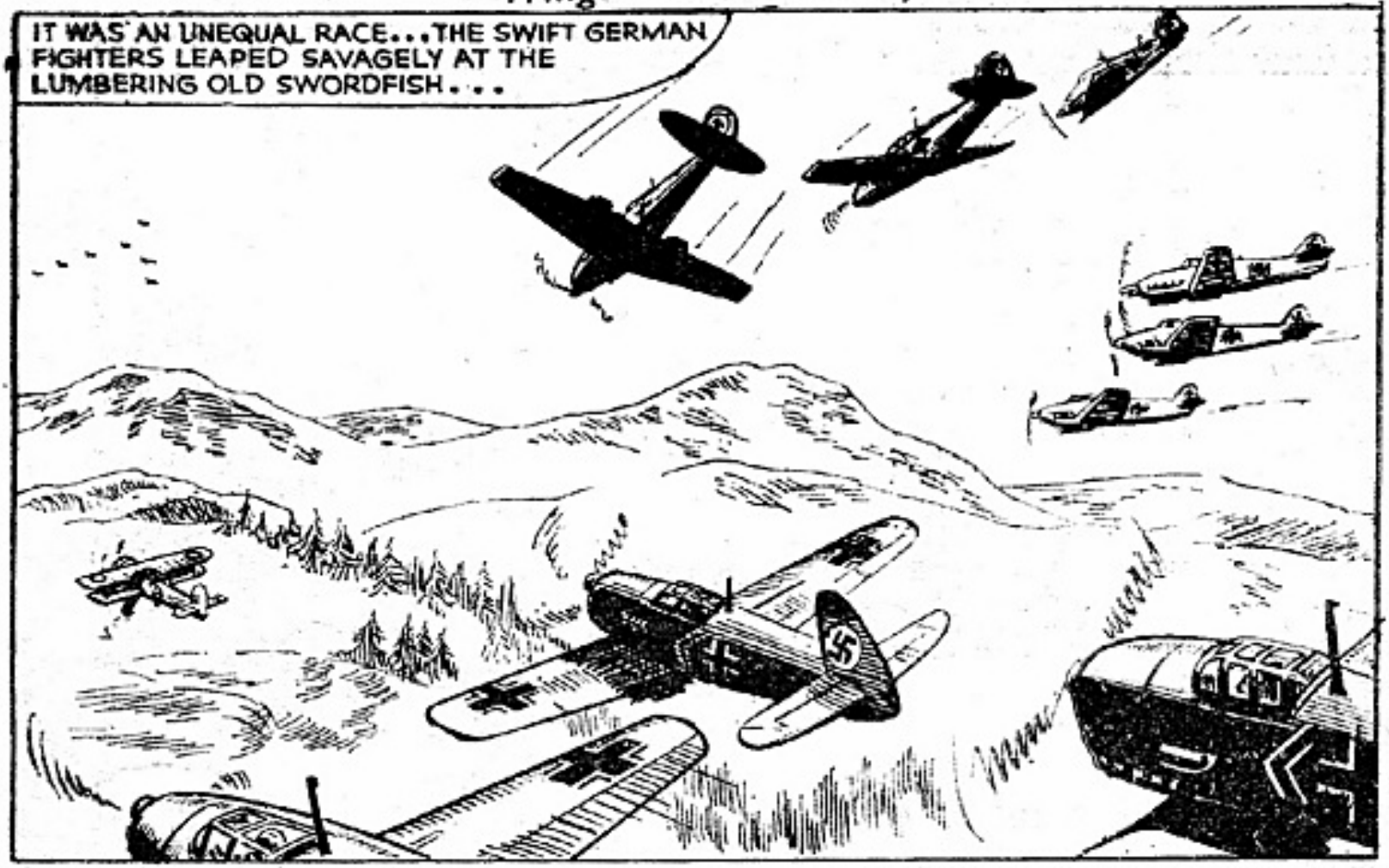
SAM SHOOK HIS HEAD, BUT THE LIGHT OF BATTLE WAS IN CURLY KNIGHT'S EYES...
DON'T YOU THINK WE'RE ASKING TOO MUCH OF ONE OLD STRINGBAG, SIR? THERE'S TWO SQUADRONS OF MESSERSCHMITTS DOWN THERE!
WE'VE GOT A COUPLE OF BOMBS LEFT, SAM! WE'LL NEVER GET A TARGET LIKE THIS AGAIN! HERE WE GO!

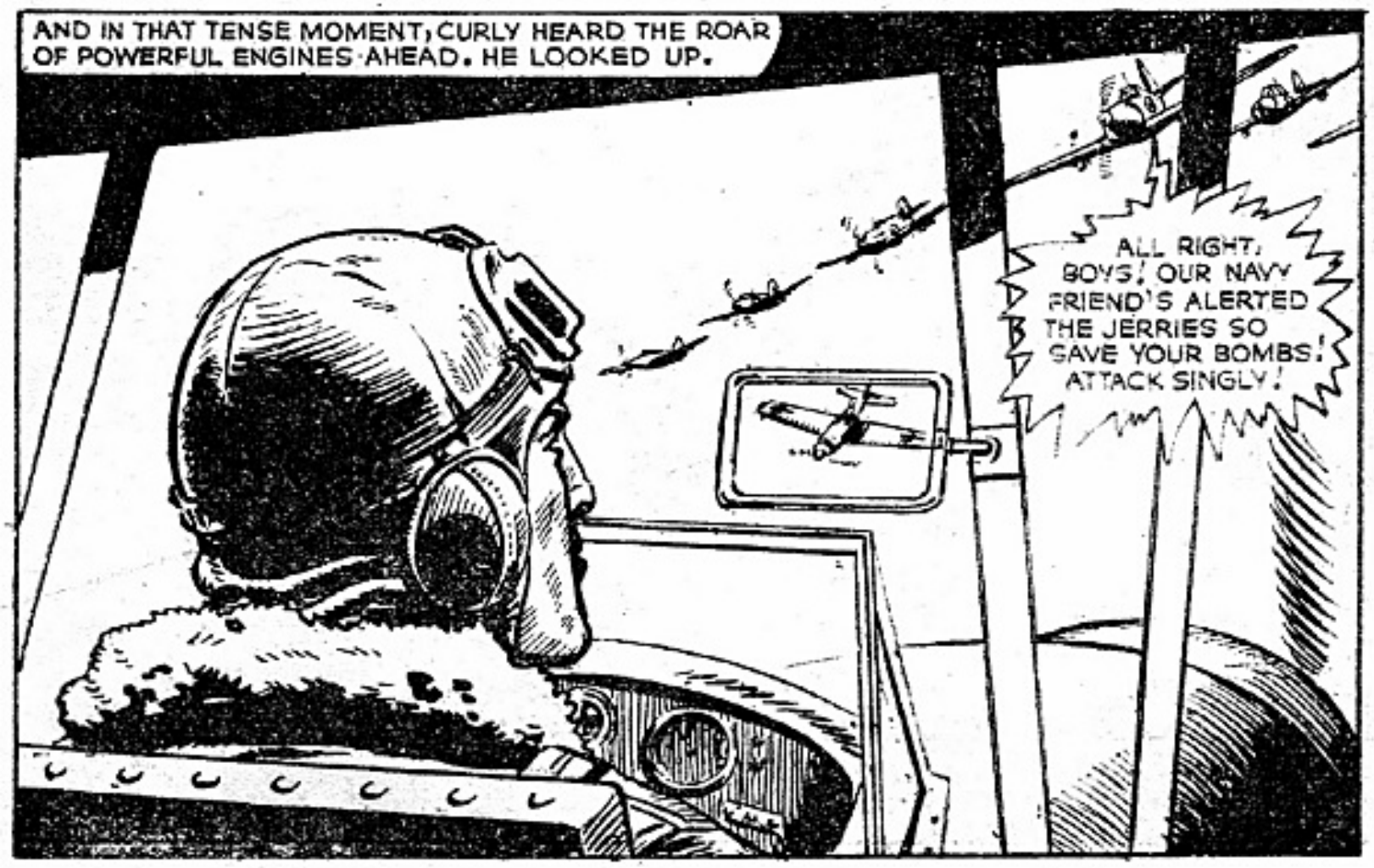

GUNS HAMMERING, THE OLD SWORDFISH SWEPT IN LOW OVER THE ENEMY AIRFIELD...
WELL, IF YOU SAY SO, SIR, HAPPEN I'LL HAVE TO TAG ALONG!

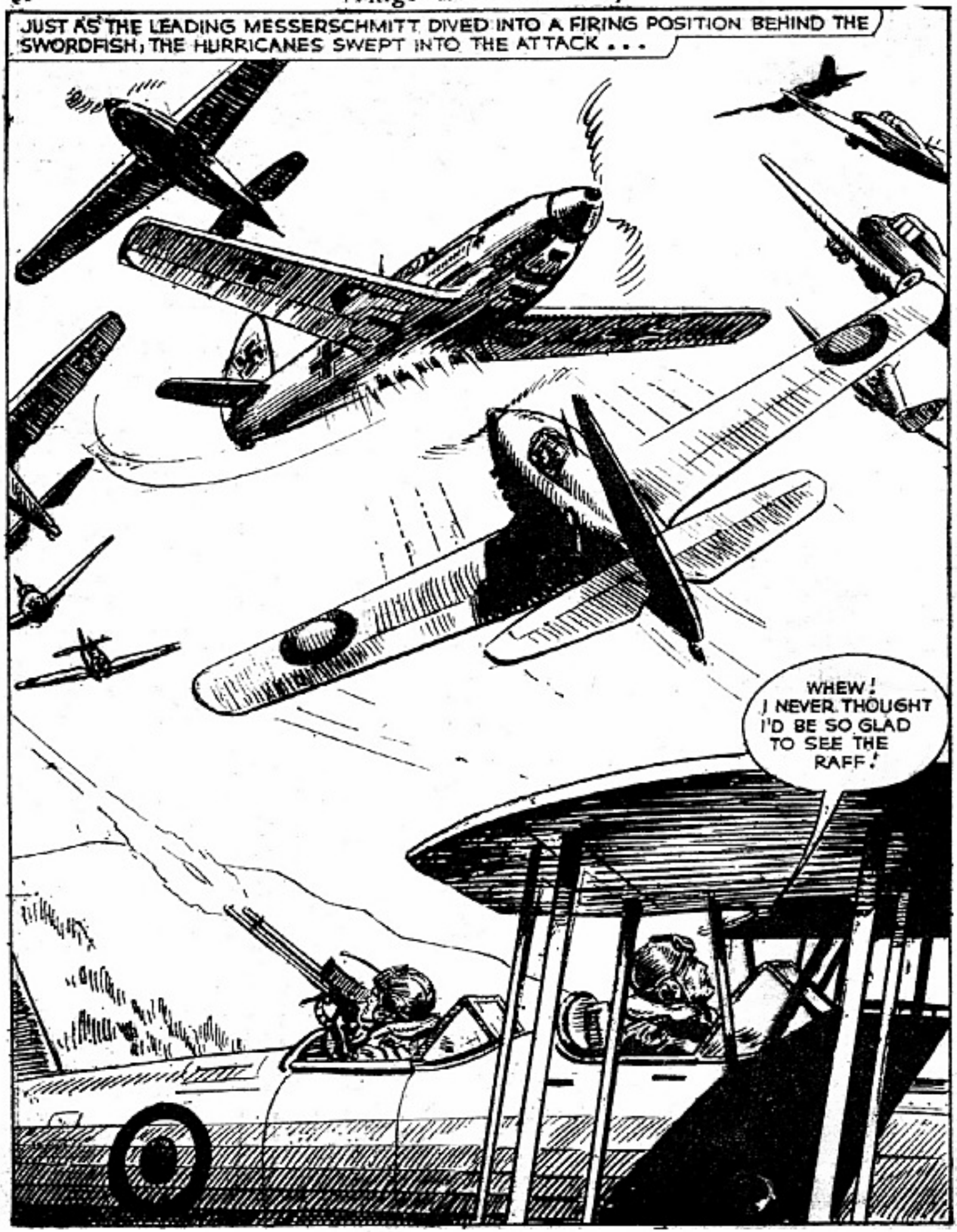

BULLETS SPATTERED INTO THE SMALL GERMAN PLANE... THE SWORDFISH KICKED UPWARDS AS ITS TWO BOMBS FELL...
GOOD WORK, SAM! NOW FOR ONE MORE RUN!

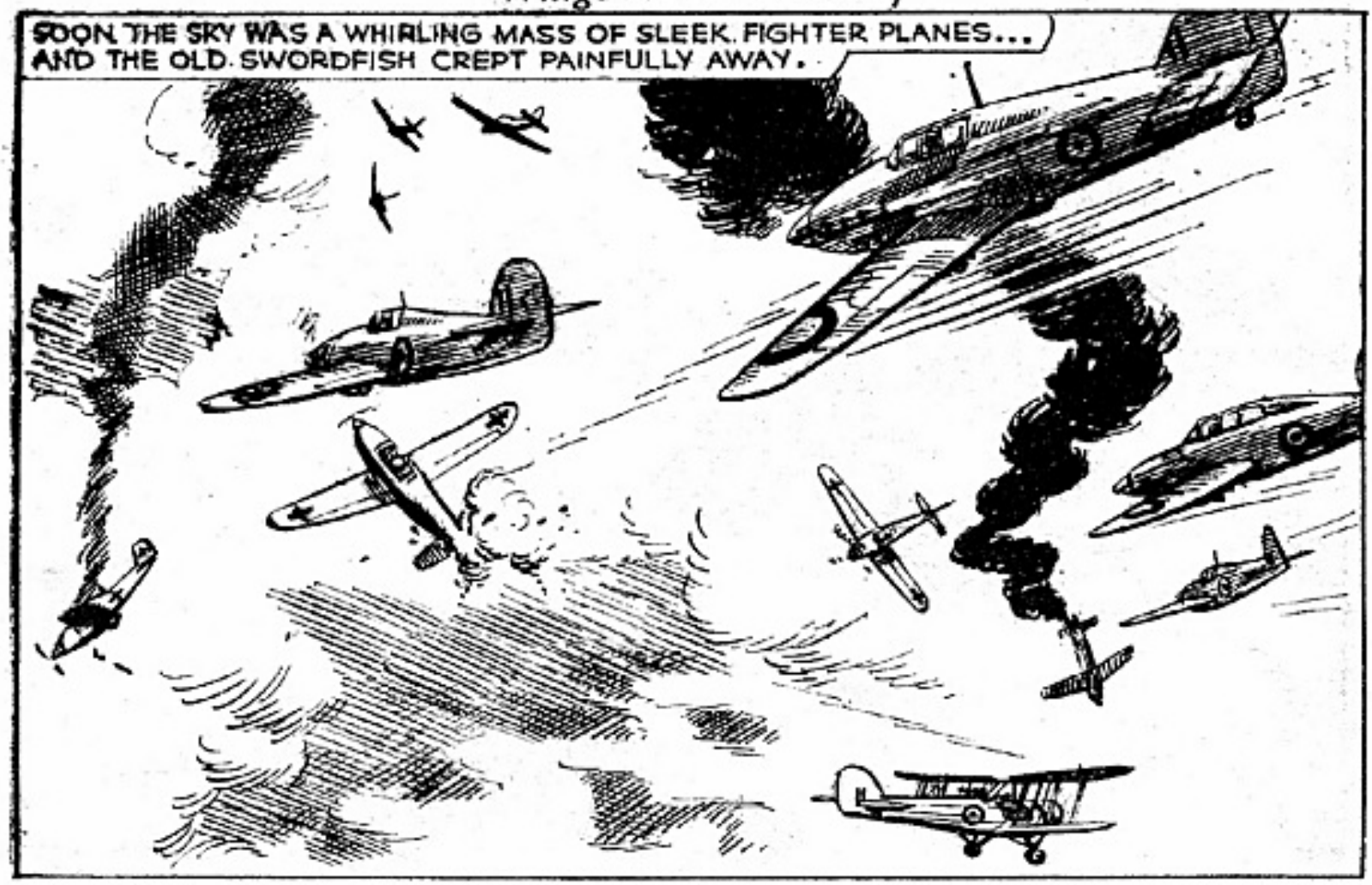

CURLY SWEPT THE PLANE INTO AS TIGHT A TURN AS HE DARED MAKE. BUT EVEN AS HE CAME BACK ON A RETURN COURSE FOR A SECOND RUN...
HMM! WE'VE STIRRED UP A HORNET'S NEST! PERHAPS WE'D BETTER MAKE TRACKS FOR THE HAWK!

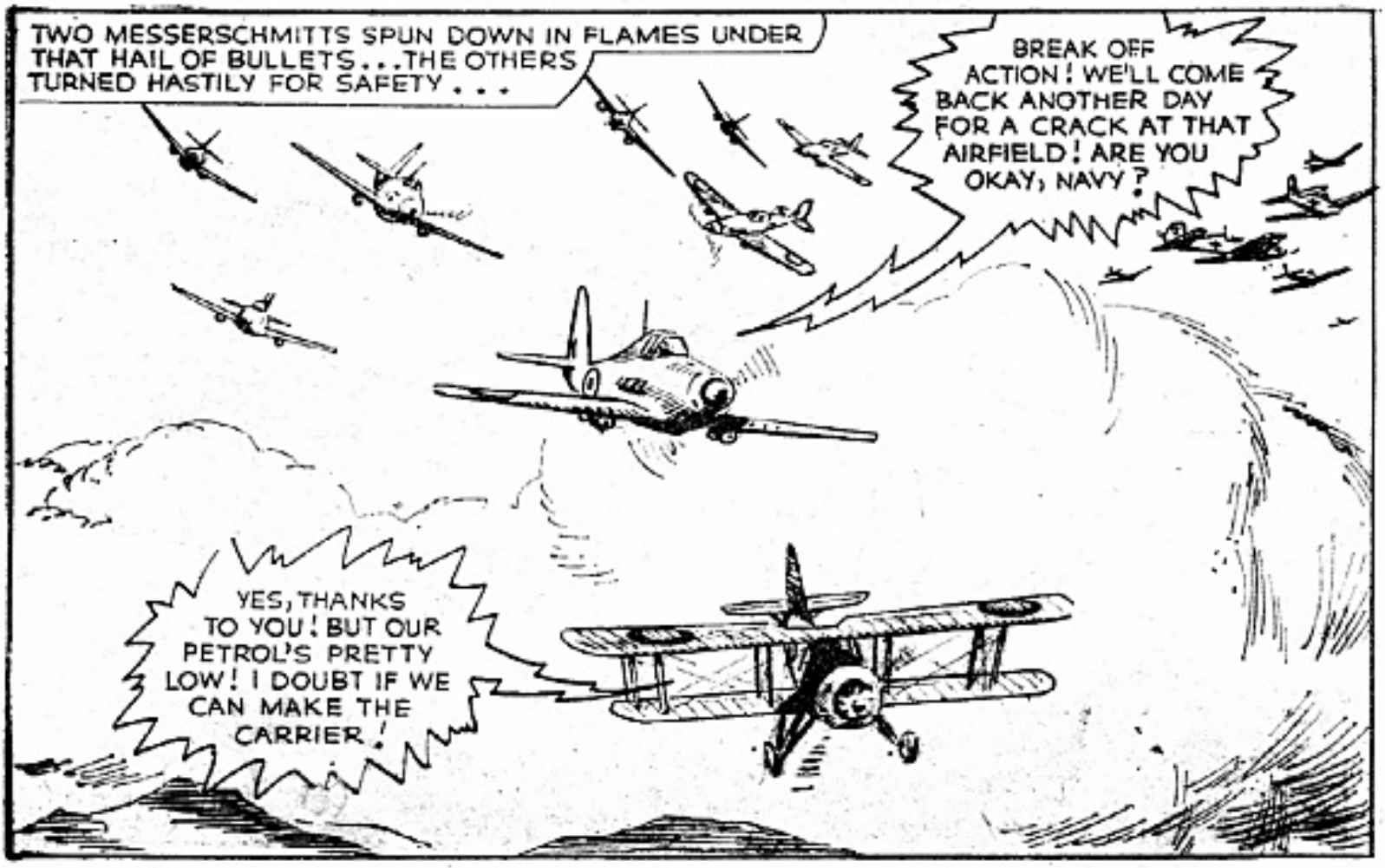

ALREADY THE MESSERSCHMITTS WERE SWARMING INTO THE AIR. CHASTENED, CURLY CROWDED ON ALL POWER AND HEADED FOR THE SEA...
THIS IS A RIGHT DO, AND NO MISTAKE!
SORRY ABOUT THIS, SAM! I SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO YOU ...AND OUR JUICE IS GETTING LOW, TOO!

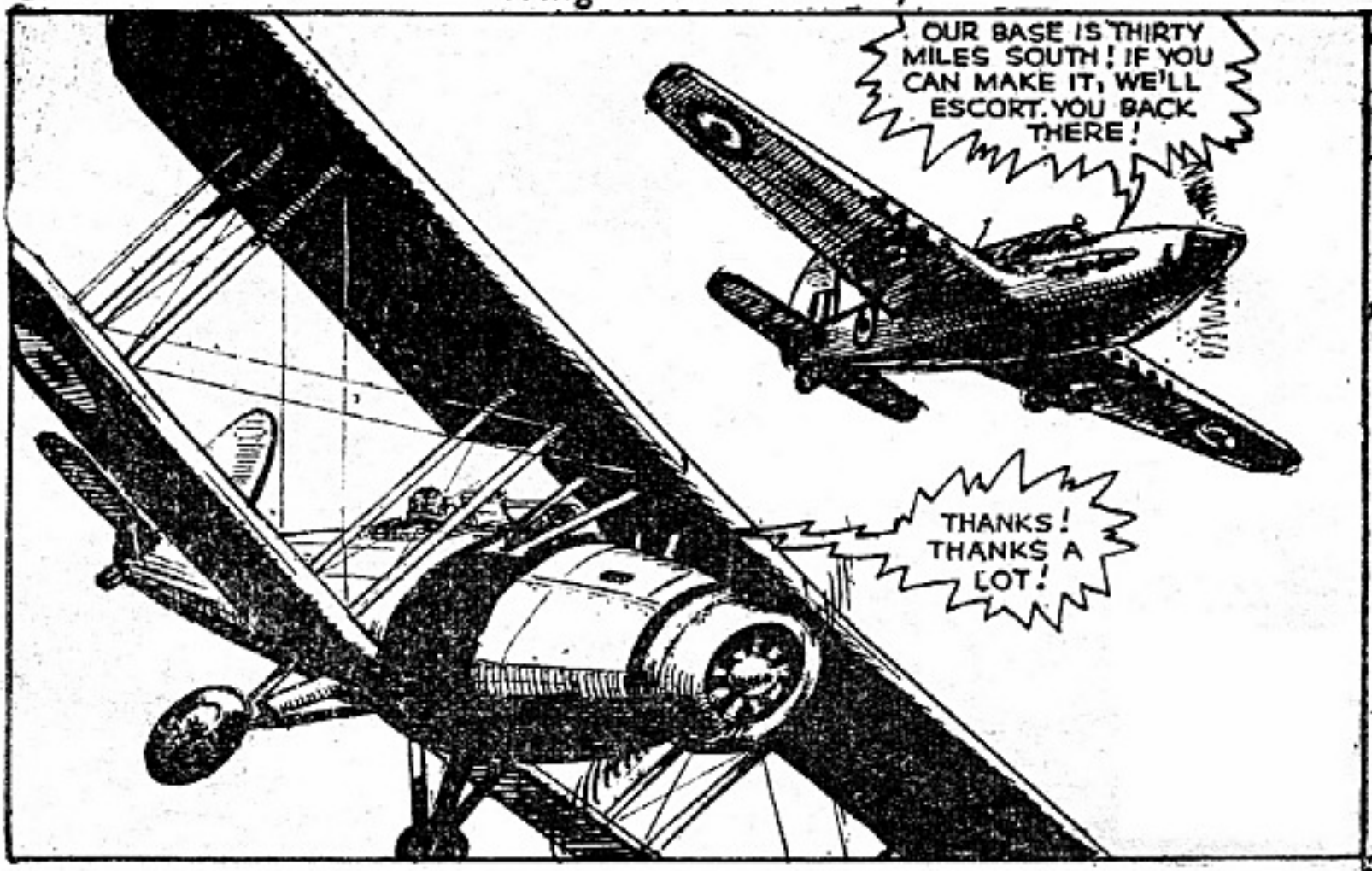

IT WAS AN UNEQUAL RACE...THE SWIFT GERMAN FIGHTERS LEAPED SAVAGELY AT THE LUMBERING OLD SWORDFISH...


AND IN THAT TENSE MOMENT, CURLY HEARD THE ROAR OF POWERFUL ENGINES AHEAD. HE LOOKED UP.
ALL RIGHT, BOYS! OUR NAVY FRIEND'S ALERTED THE JERRIES SO SAVE YOUR BOMBS! ATTACK SINGLY!

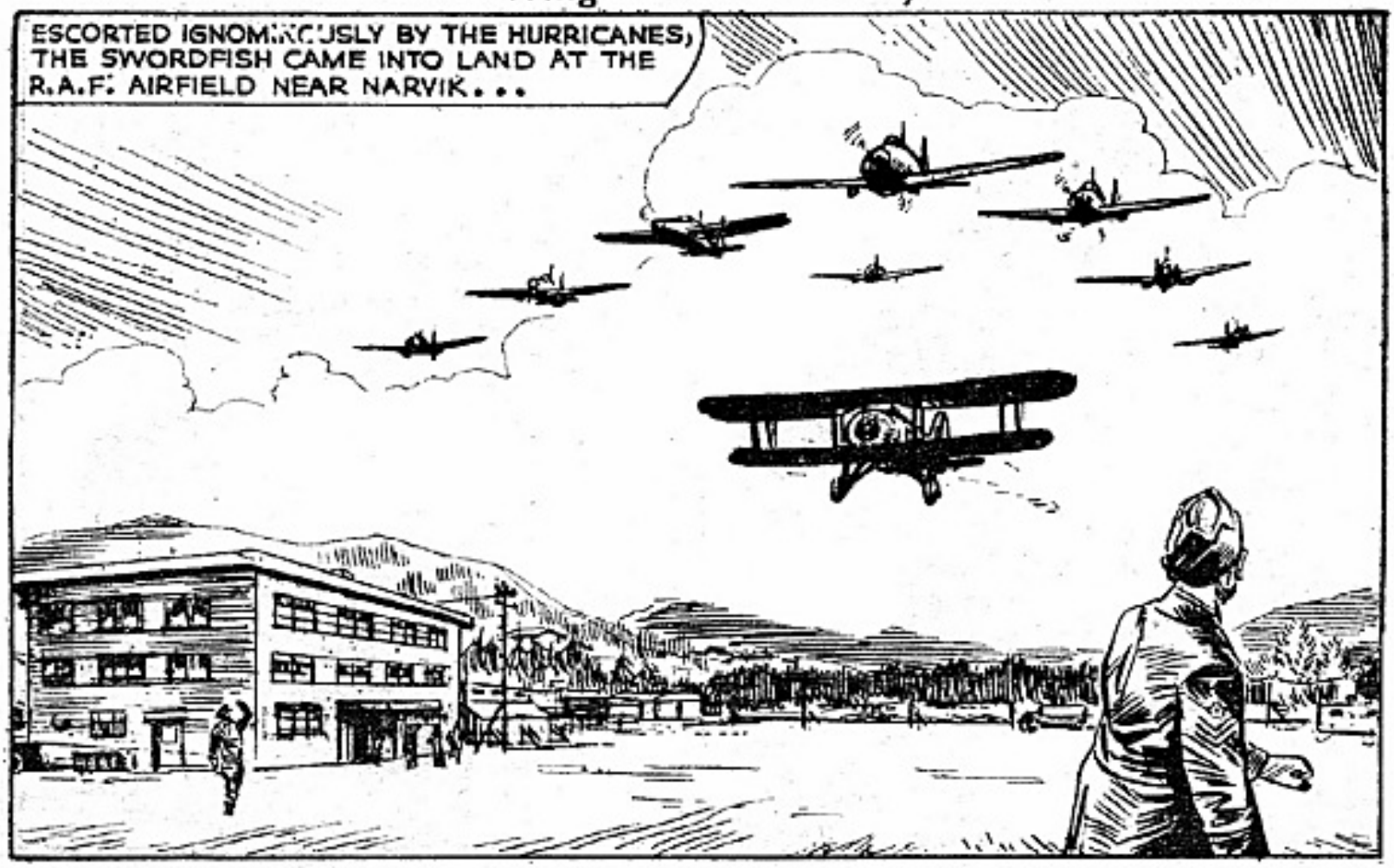

JUST AS THE LEADING MESSERSCHMITT DIVED INTO A FIRING POSITION BEHIND THE SWORDFISH, THE HURRICANES SWEPT INTO THE ATTACK . . .
WHEW! I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE SO GLAD TO SEE THE RAFF!


SOON THE SKY WAS A WHIRLING MASS OF SLEEK FIGHTER PLANES... AND THE OLD SWORDFISH CREPT PAINFULLY AWAY.


TWO MESSERSCHMITTS SPUN DOWN IN FLAMES UNDER THAT HAIL OF BULLETS...THE OTHERS TURNED HASTILY FOR SAFETY...
BREAK OFF ACTION! WE'LL COME BACK ANOTHER DAY FOR A CRACK AT THAT AIRFIELD! ARE YOU OKAY, NAVY?
YES, THANKS TO YOU! BUT OUR PETROL'S PRETTY LOW! I DOUBT IF WE CAN MAKE THE CARRIER!


OUR BASE IS THIRTY MILES SOUTH! IF YOU CAN MAKE IT, WE'LL ESCORT YOU BACK THERE!
THANKS! THANKS A LOT!

THE R.A.F. SQUADRON LEADER CUT SHORT CURLY'S THANKS WITH A GRIM SMILE...
YOU CAN SAVE THE THANKS, NAVY! YOU'LL NEED ALL YOUR BREATH FOR GROUP CAPTAIN WEBLY WHEN HE HEARS HOW YOU STIRRED UP THOSE MESSERSCHMITTS!


ESCORTED IGNOMINIOUSLY BY THE HURRICANES, THE SWORDFISH CAME INTO LAND AT THE R.A.F. AIRFIELD NEAR NARVIK...

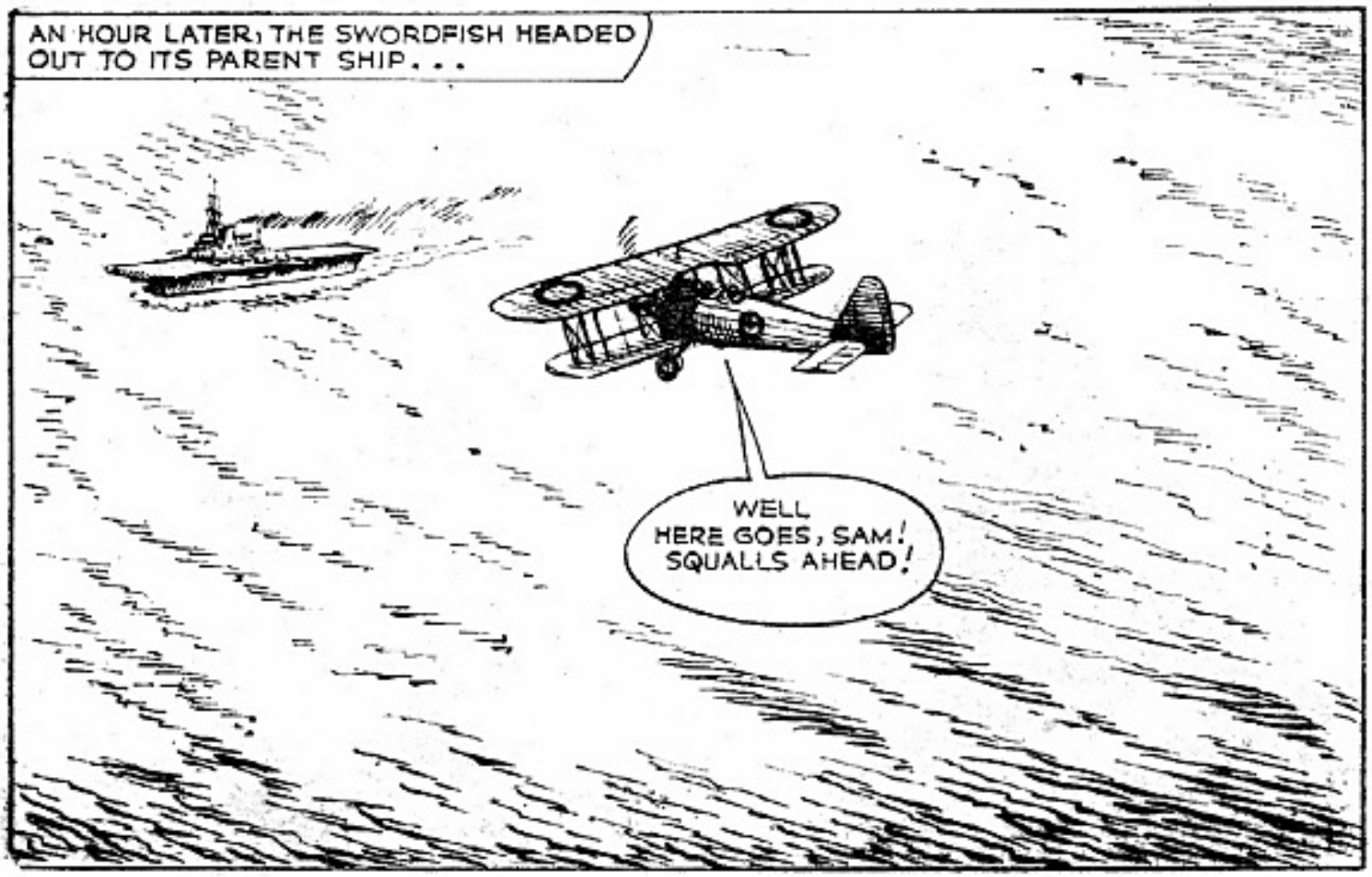
AS THE NAVY PLANE LURCHED TO A HALT ON THE TARMAC, THE R.A.F. SQUADRON LEADER WAS ALREADY TELLING HIS STORY TO HIS C.O.
SO IT'S THAT NEW BOY FROM THE HAWK, IS IT?
HALLO, SIR! I'M GRATEFUL TO YOUR CHAPS FOR PULLING US OUT OF THAT MESS!

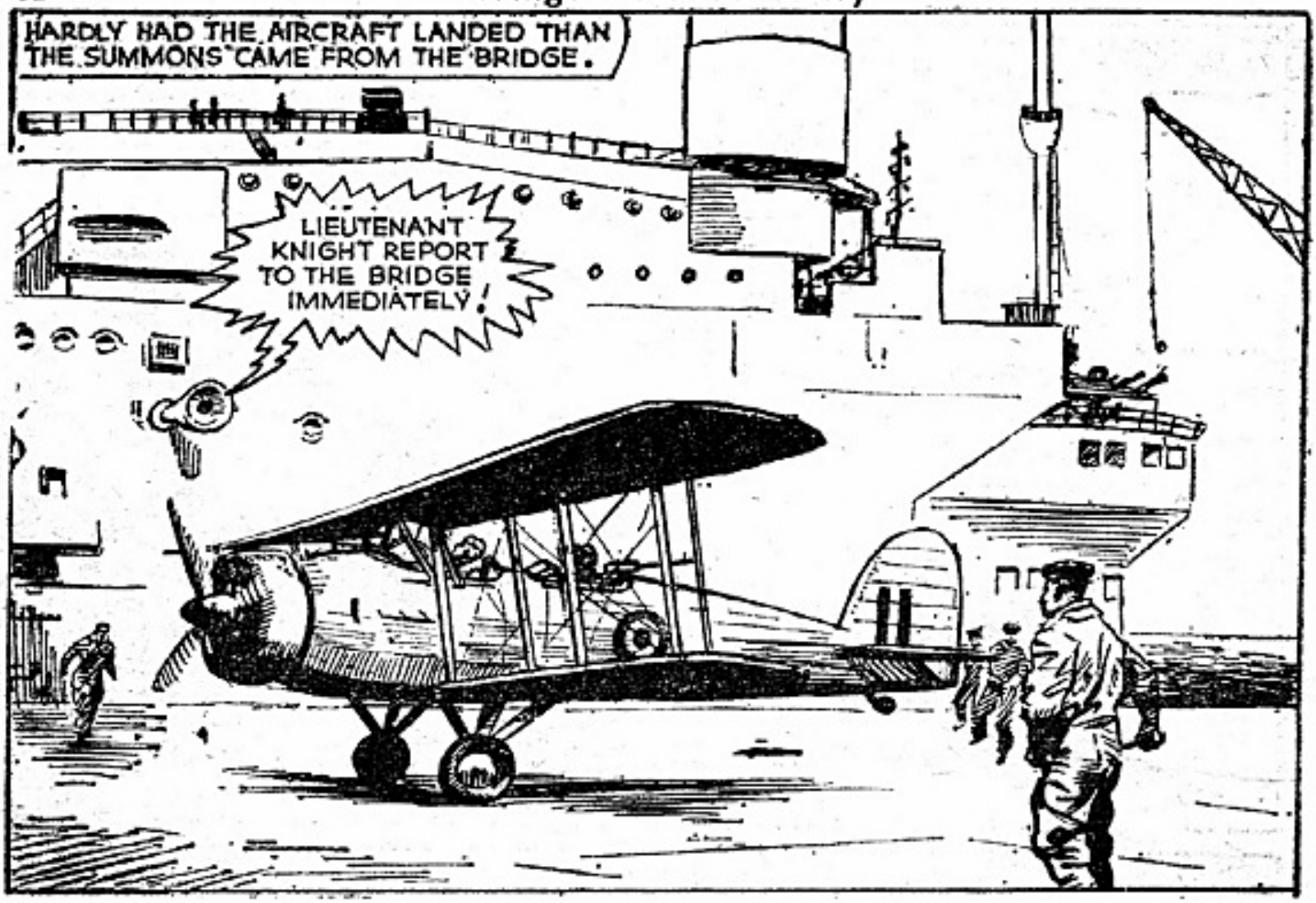
GROUP CAPTAIN WEBLY SCOWLED FEROCIOUSLY AT THE CHEERFUL YOUNG NAVY PILOT...
GRATEFUL, ARE YOU, YOU YOUNG PUPPY! DO YOU REALISE I'D PLANNED A SURPRISE RAID ON THAT AIRSTRIP! IF YOU HADN'T BLUNDERED IN FIRST AND ALERTED THEM, MY BOYS WOULD HAVE SMASHED UP EVERY JERRY PLANE BEFORE IT COULD TAKE OFF!
SORRY, SIR, I DIDN'T KNOW! WE DID DO A BIT OF DAMAGE OURSELVES...

DAMAGE!...TWO BOMB HOLES AND A SPOTTING PLANE WITH A BROKEN WING! WHY DOESN'T THE NAVY REALISE THAT THOSE BROKEN DOWN FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM PIECES AREN'T FIT TO FLY IN A MODERN WAR! YOU LEAVE THE FIGHTING TO THE R.A.F. NEXT TIME, YOU YOUNG FOOL!

THE R.A.F. OFFICER'S SCATHING CONTEMPT STUNG CURLY TO QUICK ANGER...
LOOK HERE, SIR...
SILENCE! I'M SENDING A REPORT OF THIS TO YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER! AND YOU'LL TAKE THIS RUBBISHY CRATE OF YOURS OFF MY AIRFIELD AS SOON AS WE'VE PUT SOME GAS IN IT!

STILL SMARTING, CURLY AND SAM WERE TAKEN OVER TO THE R.A.F. MESS WHILE THEIR SWORDFISH WAS BEING REFUELLED . . .
YOU MUSTN'T MIND THE C.O., NAVY! HE JUST DOESN'T SEE ANY POINT IN THE FLEET AIR ARM, THAT'S ALL!
WELL, I MADE A STUPID MISTAKE, BUT HE HASN'T ANY RIGHT TO TALK LIKE THAT. ONE OF THESE DAYS WE'LL SHOW HIM WHAT THE FLEET AIR ARM CAN DO!


AN HOUR LATER, THE SWORDFISH HEADED OUT TO ITS PARENT SHIP . . .
WELL HERE GOES, SAM! SQUALLS AHEAD!


HARDLY HAD THE AIRCRAFT LANDED THAN THE SUMMONS CAME FROM THE BRIDGE.
LIEUTENANT KNIGHT REPORT TO THE BRIDGE IMMEDIATELY!

CAPTAIN RIVERS TURNED STERNLY TO FACE HIS YOUNG PILOT...
I HAVE RECEIVED A REPORT FROM GROUP CAPTAIN WEBLY, LIEUTENANT. IT APPEARS THAT YOU FLEW FIFTY MILES INLAND, MADE A FUTILE ATTACK ON AN ENEMY AIRFIELD, QUEERED THE R.A.F.'S PLANS, AND THEN RAN OUT OF PETROL AND HAD TO BE ESCORTED BACK TO REFUEL! WELL?
I'M SORRY, SIR.

THE COMMANDING OFFICER'S VOICE WAS QUIET, BUT HIS WORDS SHAMED CURLY KNIGHT...
I'M SORRY TOO, LIEUTENANT! IT'S BAD ENOUGH THAT YOU DISOBEYED ORDERS! WHAT'S WORSE IS THAT YOU GAVE THE R.A.F. AN EXCUSE TO SNEER AT THE NAVY! THAT I CAN'T FORGIVE! I SHALL HAVE TO THINK WHAT TO DO WITH YOU! THAT WILL BE ALL.

THE YOUNG NAVAL AIRMAN WENT TO THE MESS AND FLUNG HIMSELF BITTERLY IN A CHAIR...
WHAT'S THE OLD MAN GOING TO DO TO YOU, CURLY.?
I DON'T KNOW YET! WHATEVER HE DOES HE CAN'T KICK ME MORE THAN I'M KICKING MYSELF! HAVING TO BE HELPED BY THAT FIRE-EATING WEBLY'S CROWD... UGH!

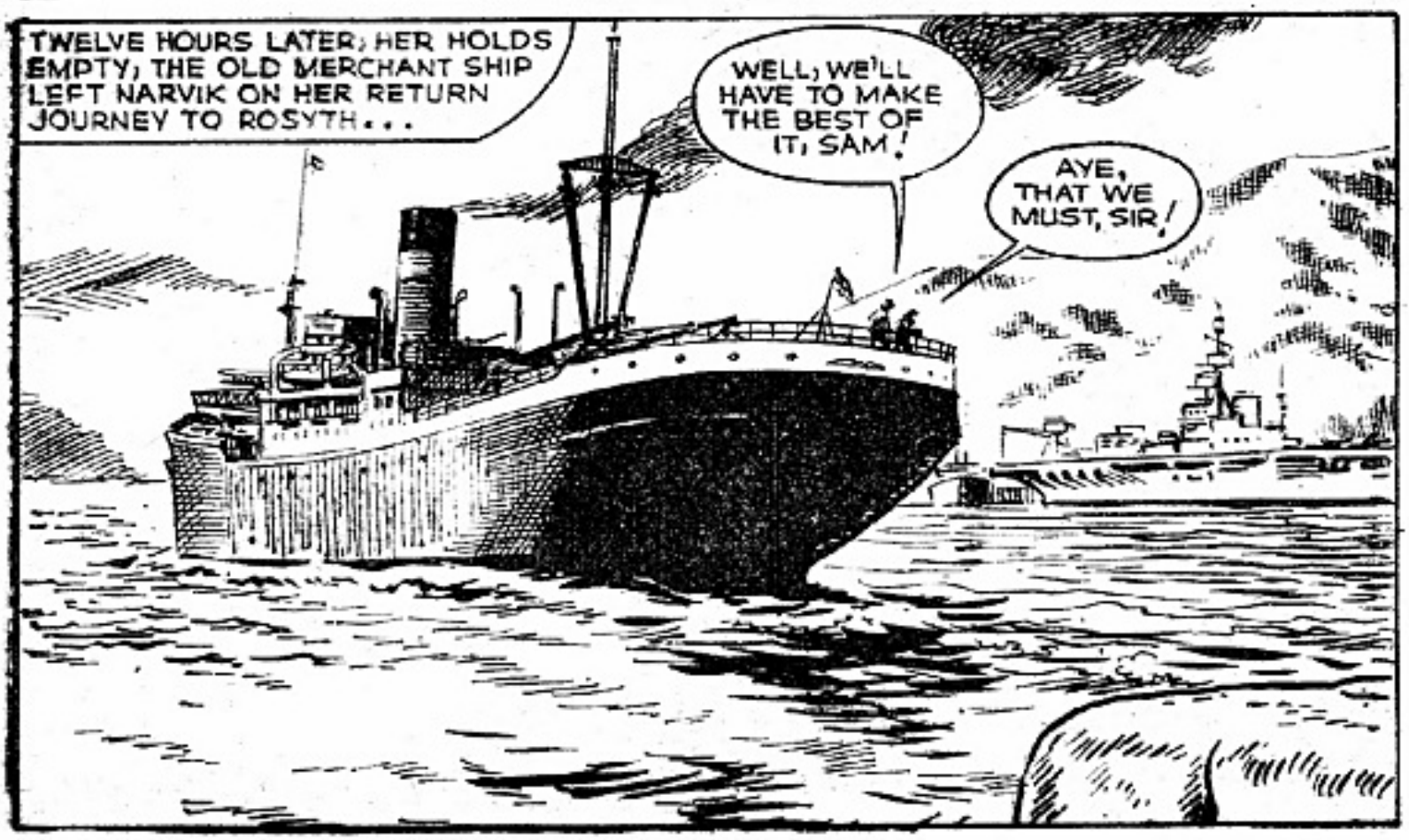
A MOMENT LATER THE DUTY OFFICER BROUGHT NEWS OF CURLY'S PUNISHMENT...
ORDERS FOR YOU, LIEUTENANT! YOU'RE BEING POSTED TO A CAMSHIP! SHE'S THE GLAMIS CASTLE, FERRYING SUPPLIES FROM ROSYTH TO NARVIK. YOU JOIN HER TOMORROW WHEN WE BERTH.
AYE, AYE, SIR!

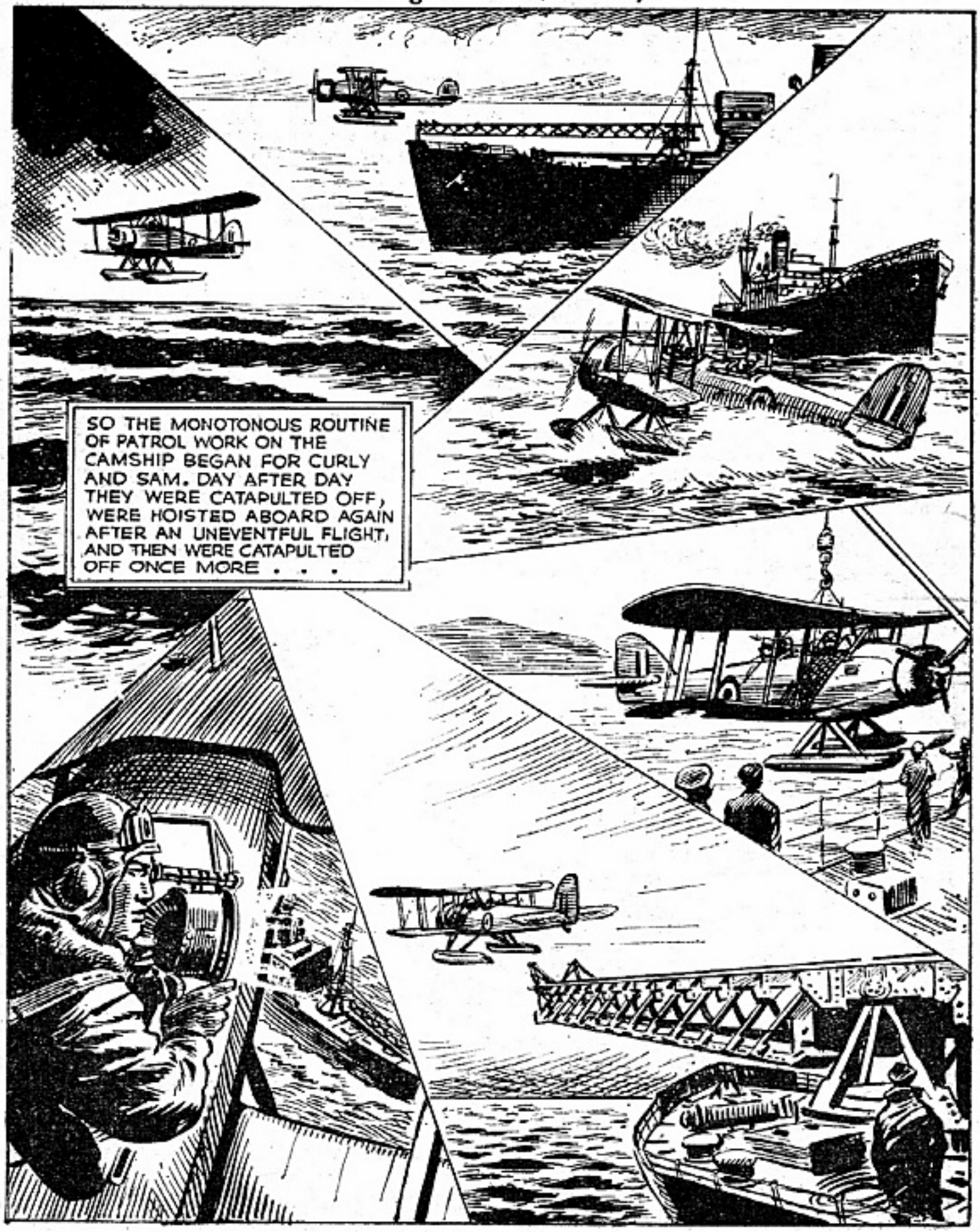
THE CAMSHIPS WERE MERCHANT NAVY VESSELS FITTED WITH CATAPULTS FOR FLYING OFF SINGLE AIRCRAFT. THE PILOT LANDED ON THE SEA AFTER HIS PATROL AND HIS AIRCRAFT WAS HOISTED ABOARD THE SHIP AGAIN... IT WAS A HARD UNSPECTACULAR JOB FOR THE FLEET AIR ARM PILOTS...
I'M SORRY YOU'RE LEAVING US, CURLY!
SO AM I, PETE! BUT I SUPPOSE I ASKED FOR IT!

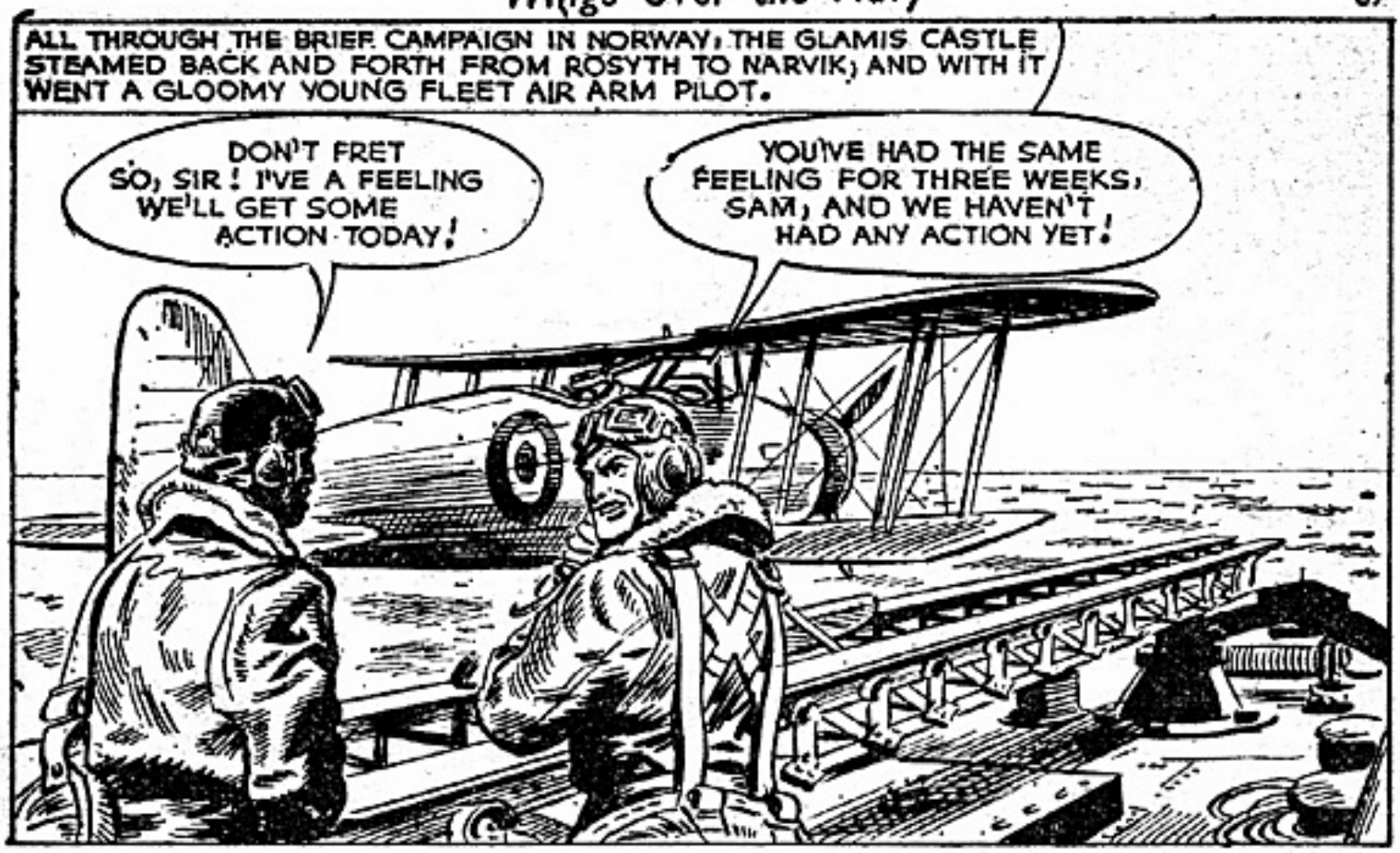
HEAVY-HEARTED, CURLY WENT ON DECK TO FIND SAM BLAKE...
WELL THAT'S WHAT WE'RE BEING POSTED TO, SAM! BUT THERE'S NO REASON WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE TO COME. IT WAS MY MISTAKE! I'LL SEE THE DUTY OFFICER...
THAT YOU WON'T, SIR! HAPPEN I'LL TAG ALONG WITH YOU LIKE I DID BEFORE!

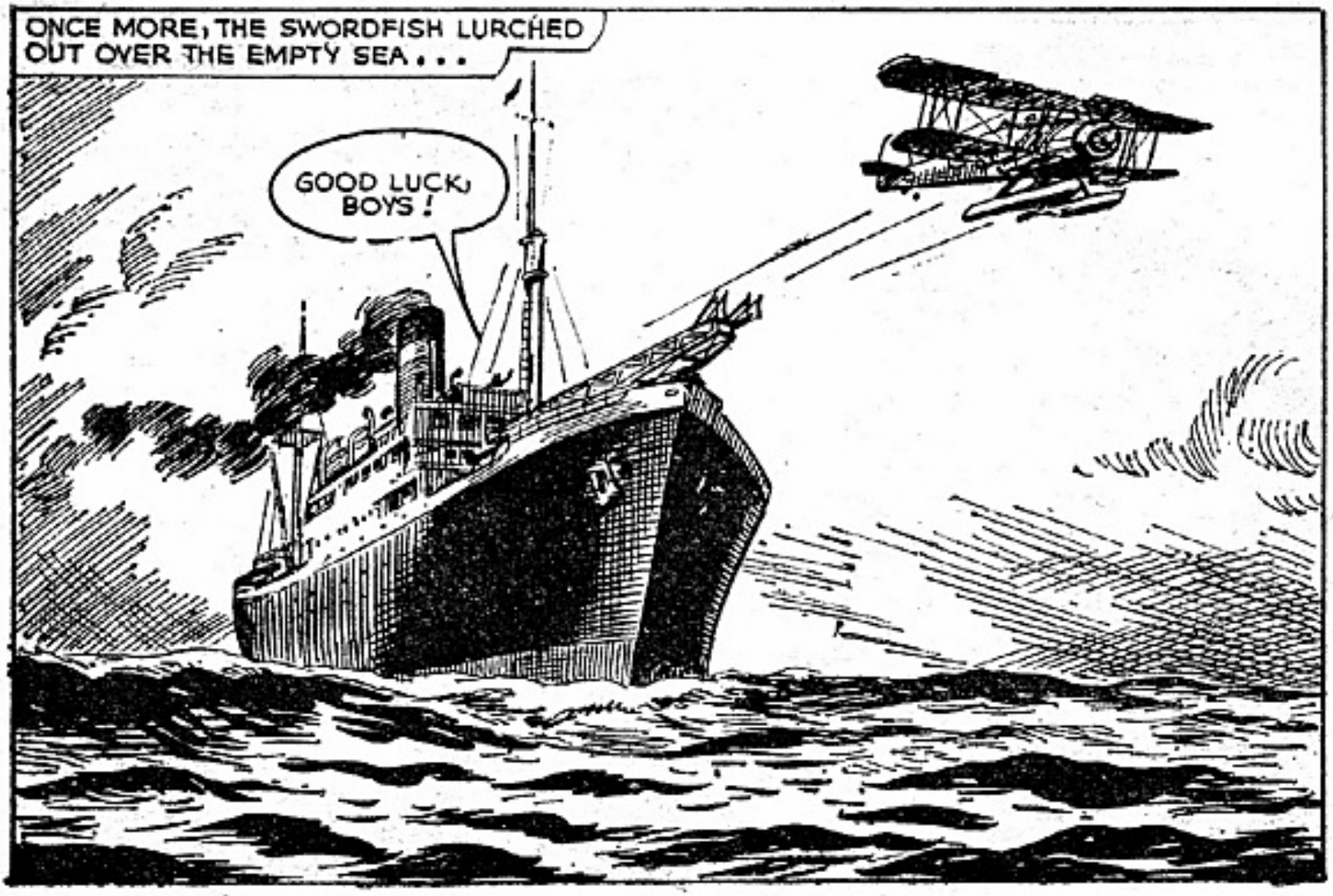
NEXT DAY, WHEN THE HAWK BERTHED AT NARVIK...
WE'LL COME BACK TO HER ONE DAY, SAM, I SWEAR WE WILL...

Chapter 3. DUEL WITH A U-BOAT

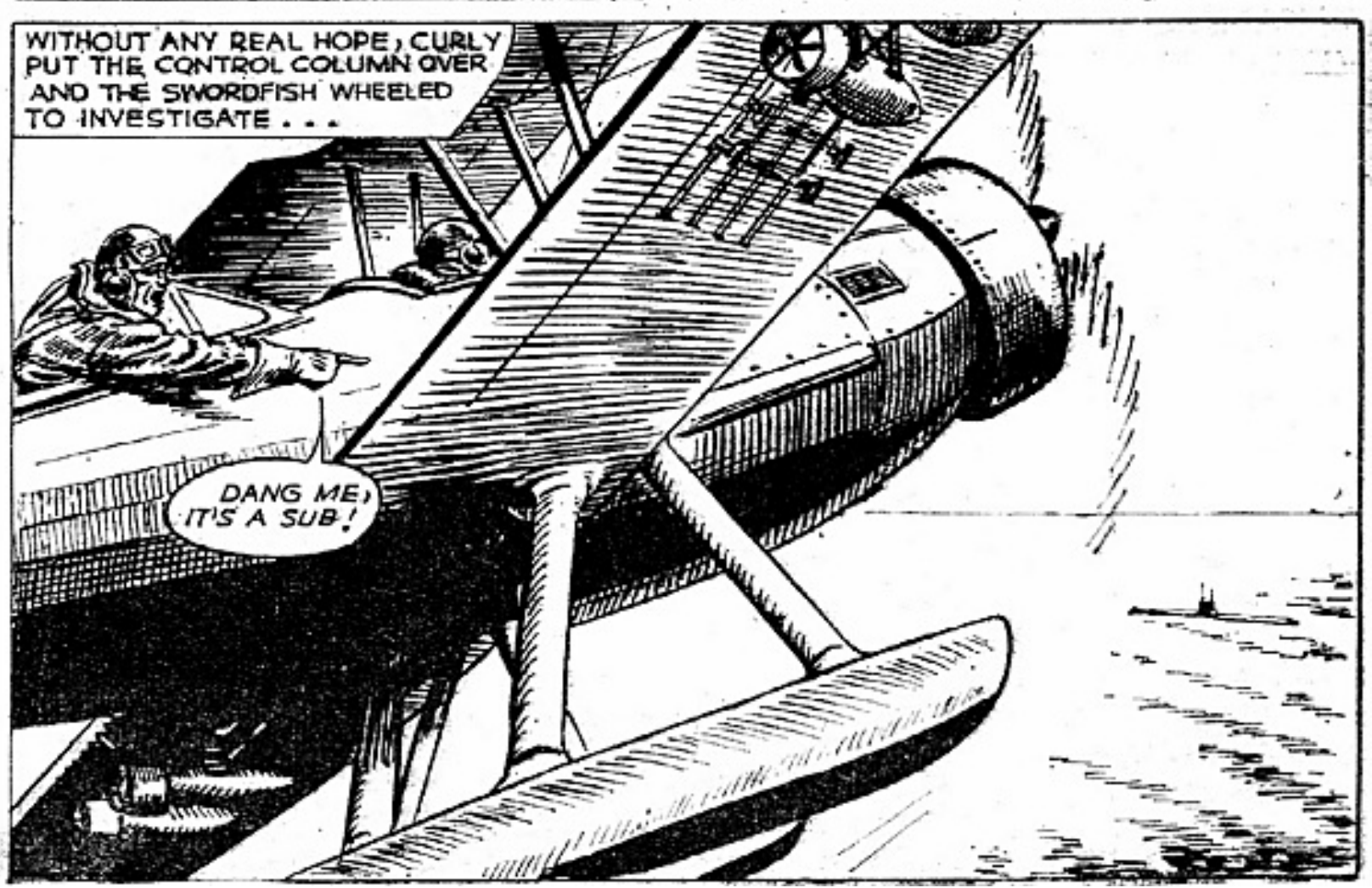



SO THE MONOTONOUS ROUTINE OF PATROL WORK ON THE CAMSHIP BEGAN FOR CURLY AND SAM. DAY AFTER DAY THEY WERE CATAPULTED OFF, WERE HOISTED ABOARD AGAIN AFTER AN UNEVENTFUL FLIGHT, AND THEN WERE CATAPULTED OFF ONCE MORE . . .

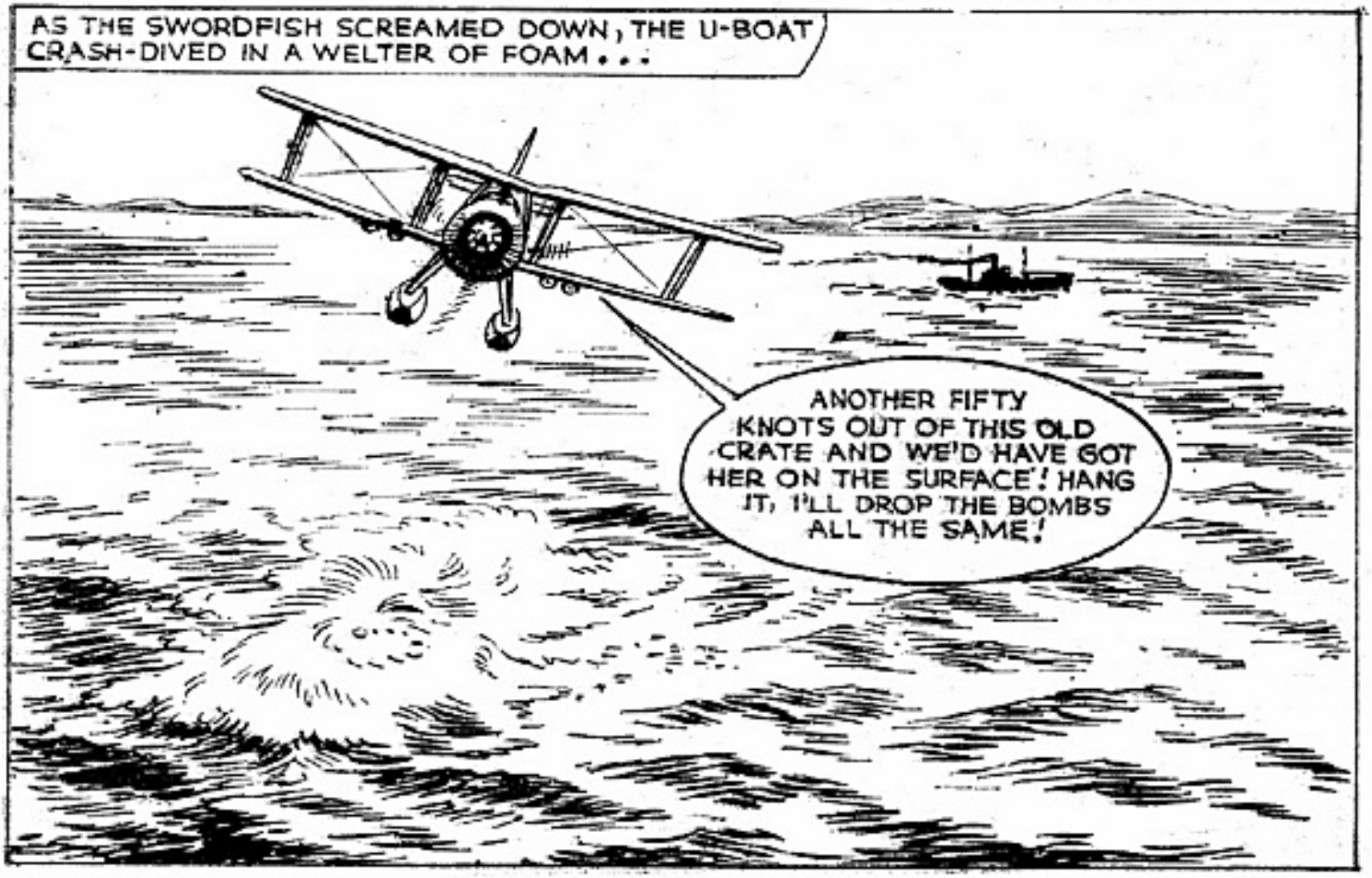

ALL THROUGH THE BRIEF CAMPAIGN IN NORWAY, THE GLAMIS CASTLE STEAMED BACK AND FORTH FROM ROSYTH TO NARVIK, AND WITH IT WENT A GLOOMY YOUNG FLEET AIR ARM PILOT.
DON'T FRET SO, SIR! I'VE A FEELING WE'LL GET SOME ACTION TODAY!
YOU'VE HAD THE SAME FEELING FOR THREE WEEKS, SAM, AND WE HAVEN'T HAD ANY ACTION YET!

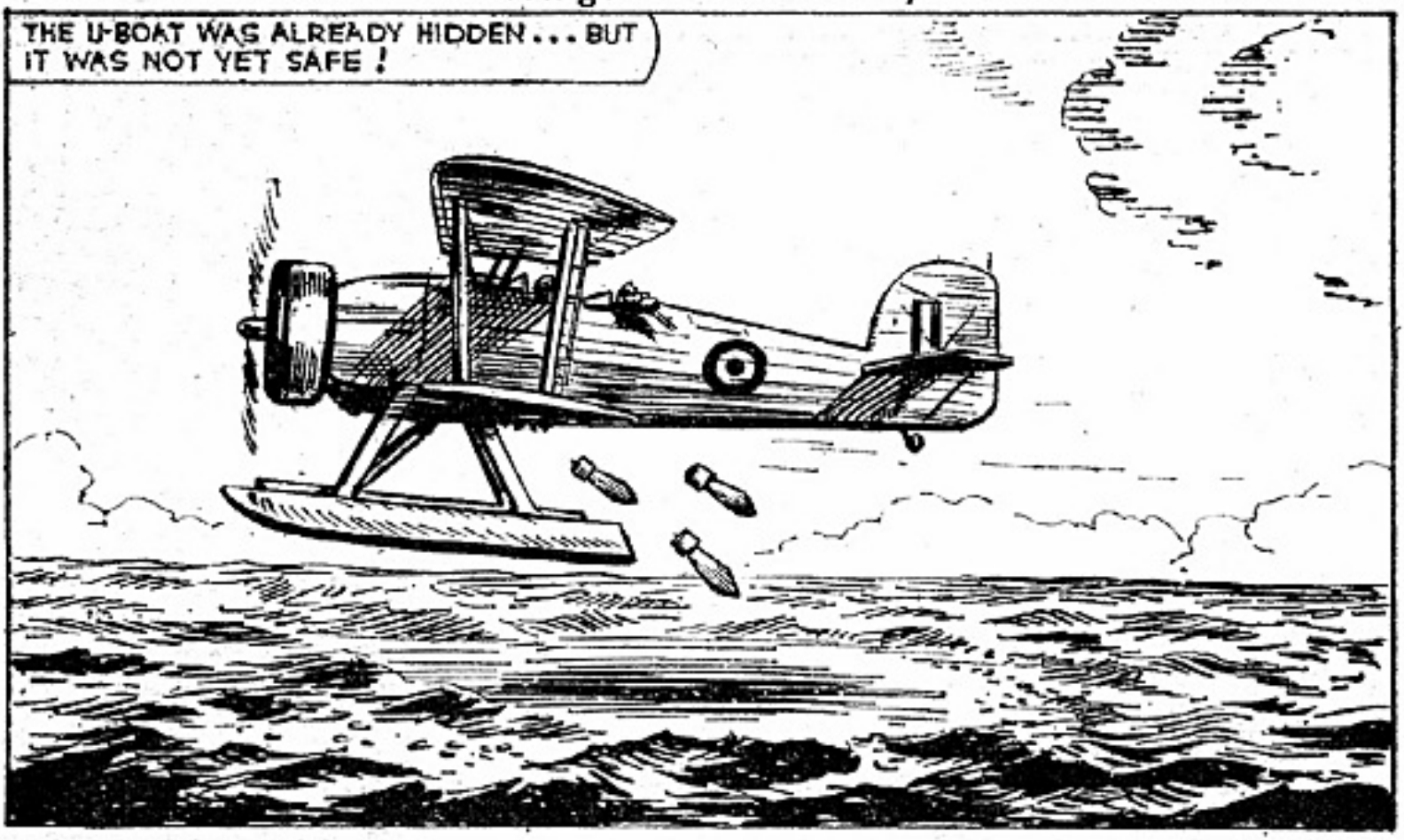

ONCE MORE, THE SWORDFISH LURCHED OUT OVER THE EMPTY SEA...
GOOD LUCK, BOYS!

ONCE MORE, THE PATROL PASSED WITHOUT INCIDENT... UNTIL SAM'S VOICE SUDDENLY SHARPENED...
WELL, THE PATROL'S NEARLY OVER, SAM! WHERE'S THE ACTION YOU HAD A FEELING ABOUT?
YOU CAN LAUGH, SIR, BUT... HOLD ON, THERE'S SOMETHING TO STARBOARD!

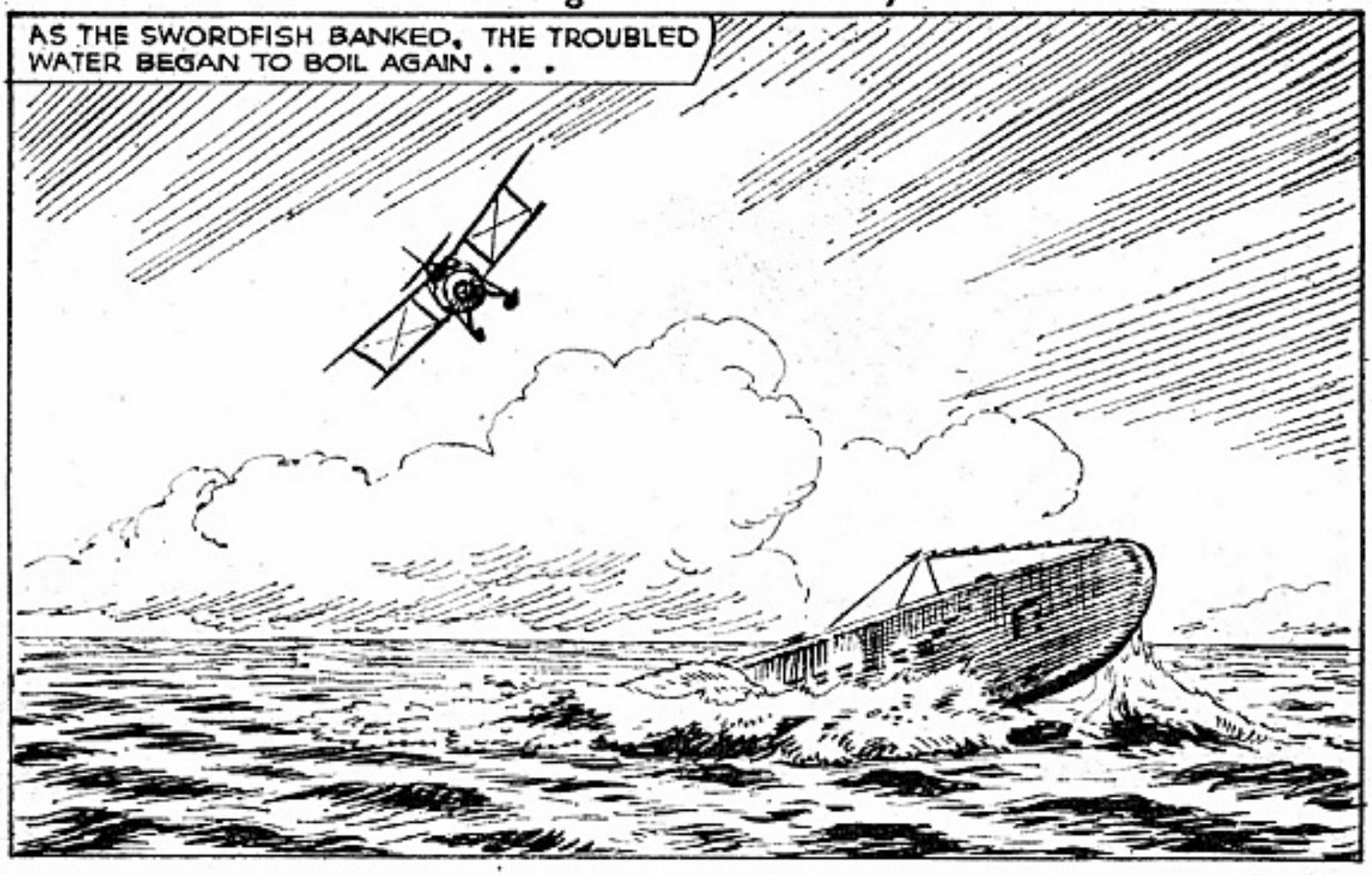

WITHOUT ANY REAL HOPE, CURLY PUT THE CONTROL COLUMN OVER AND THE SWORDFISH WHEELED TO INVESTIGATE...
DANG ME, IT'S A SUB!

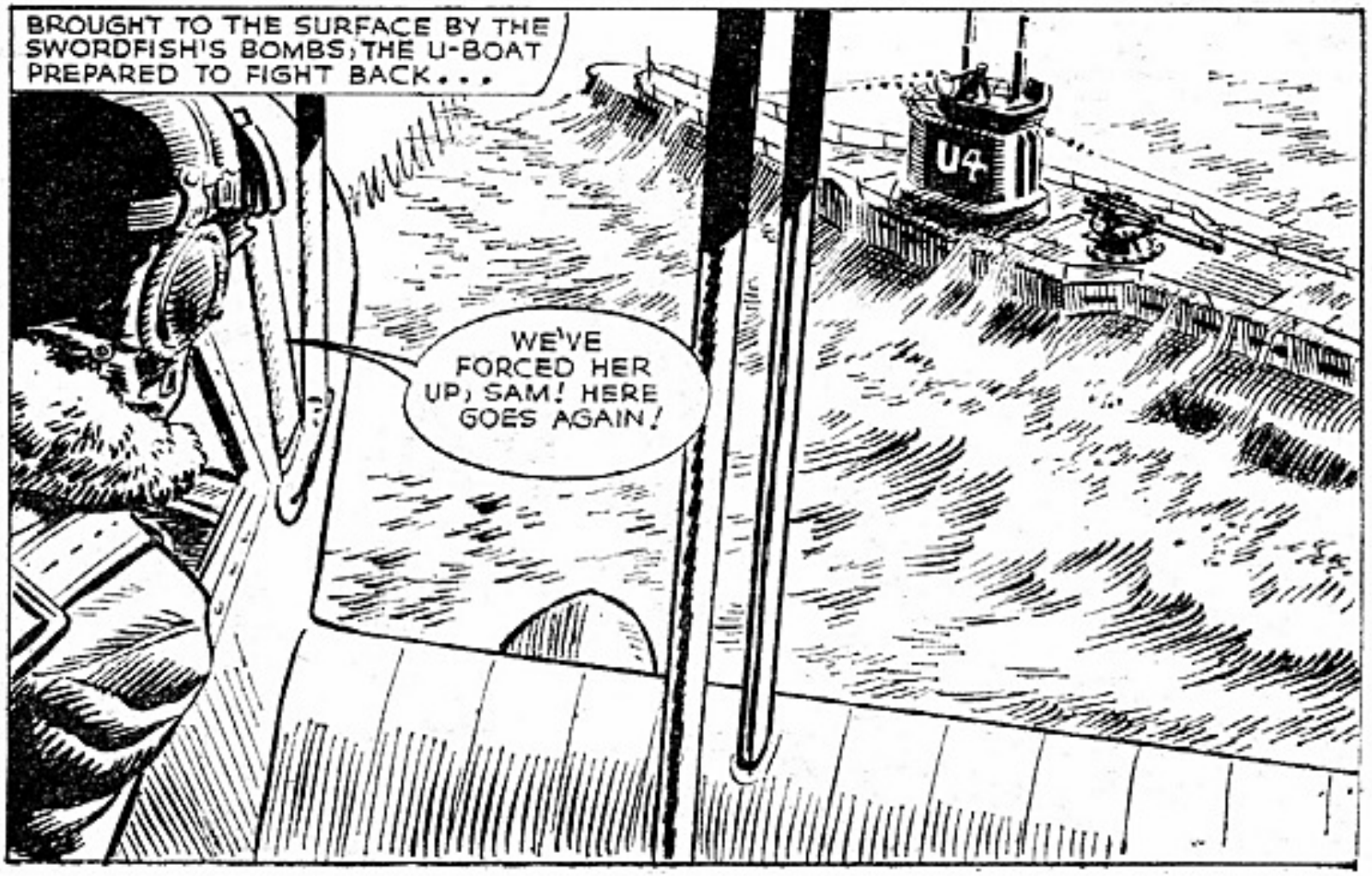
IT WAS A U-BOAT... SAM BLAKE'S FEELING HAD PAID OFF!
SHE'S SEEN US! SHE'S DIVING! WHY CAN'T THIS DARNED OLD HEARSE GIVE US MORE SPEED!

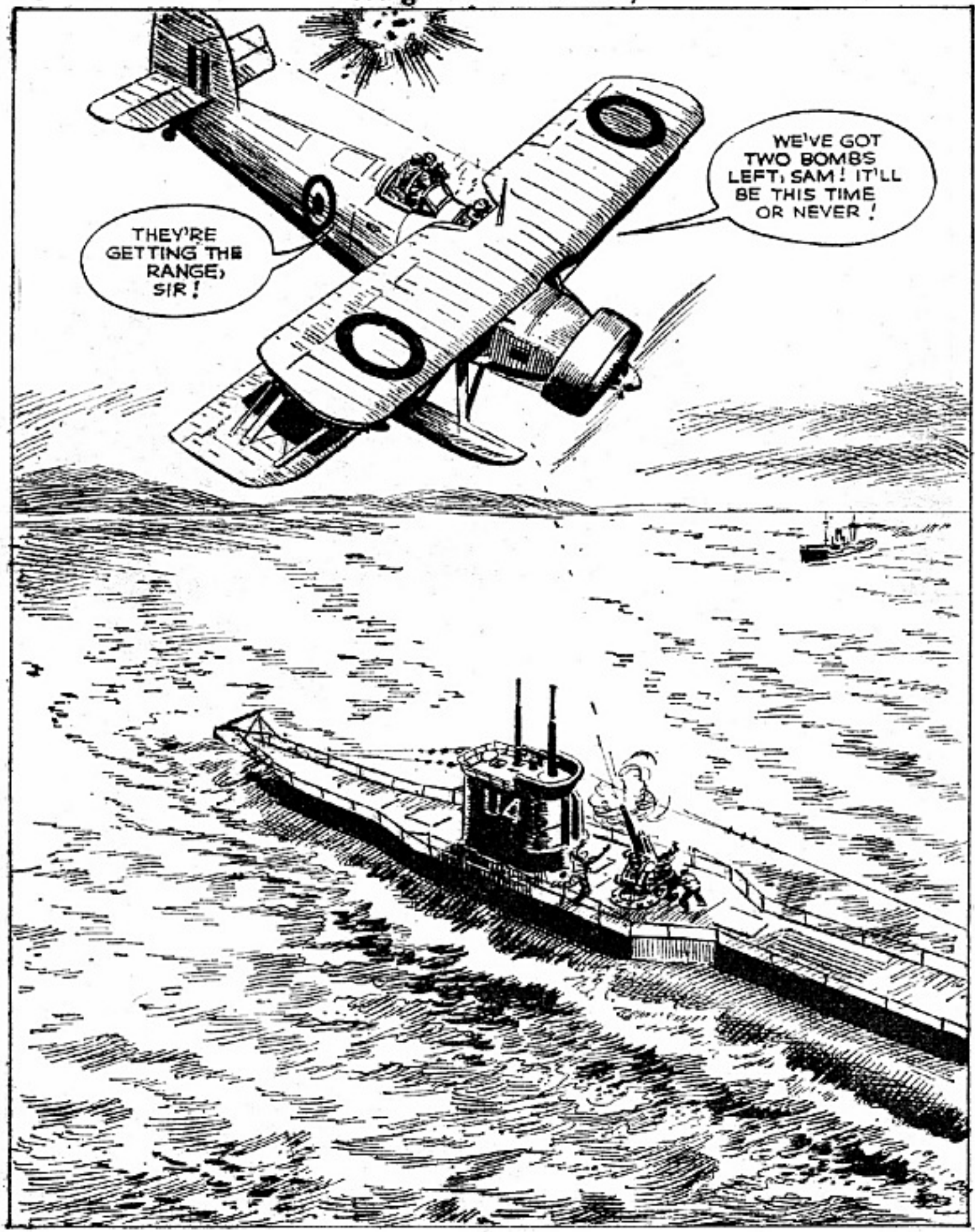

AS THE SWORDFISH SCREAMED DOWN, THE U-BOAT CRASH-DIVED IN A WELTER OF FOAM...
ANOTHER FIFTY KNOTS OUT OF THIS OLD CRATE AND WE'D HAVE GOT HER ON THE SURFACE! HANG IT, I'LL DROP THE BOMBS ALL THE SAME!


THE U-BOAT WAS ALREADY HIDDEN . . . BUT IT WAS NOT YET SAFE !

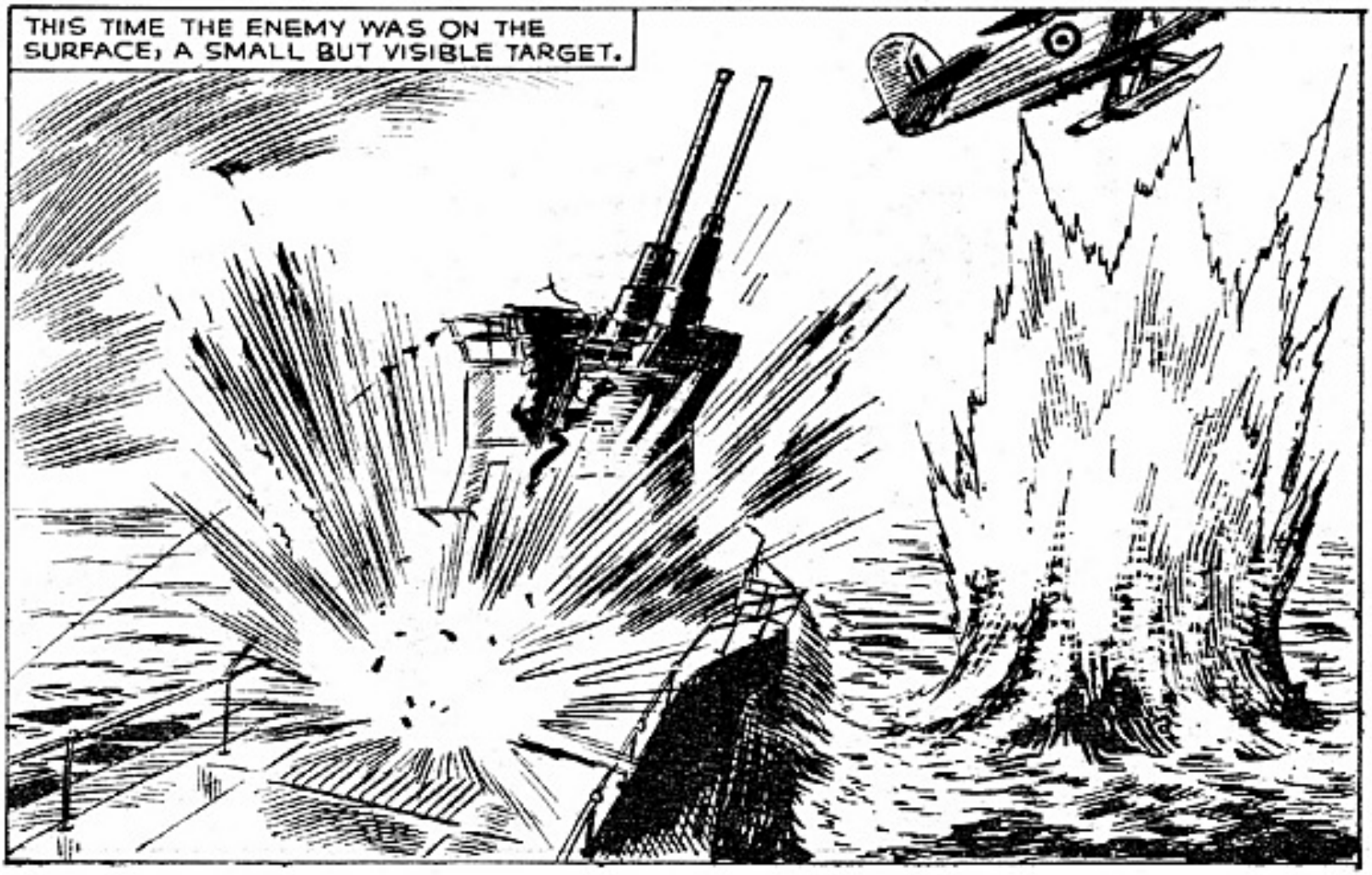
LOOKING BACK, SAM BLAKE SAW THE FOUNTAIN OF TORTURED WATER . . .
SMACK ON THE TARGET, SIR! WE MAY STILL BRING HER UP!

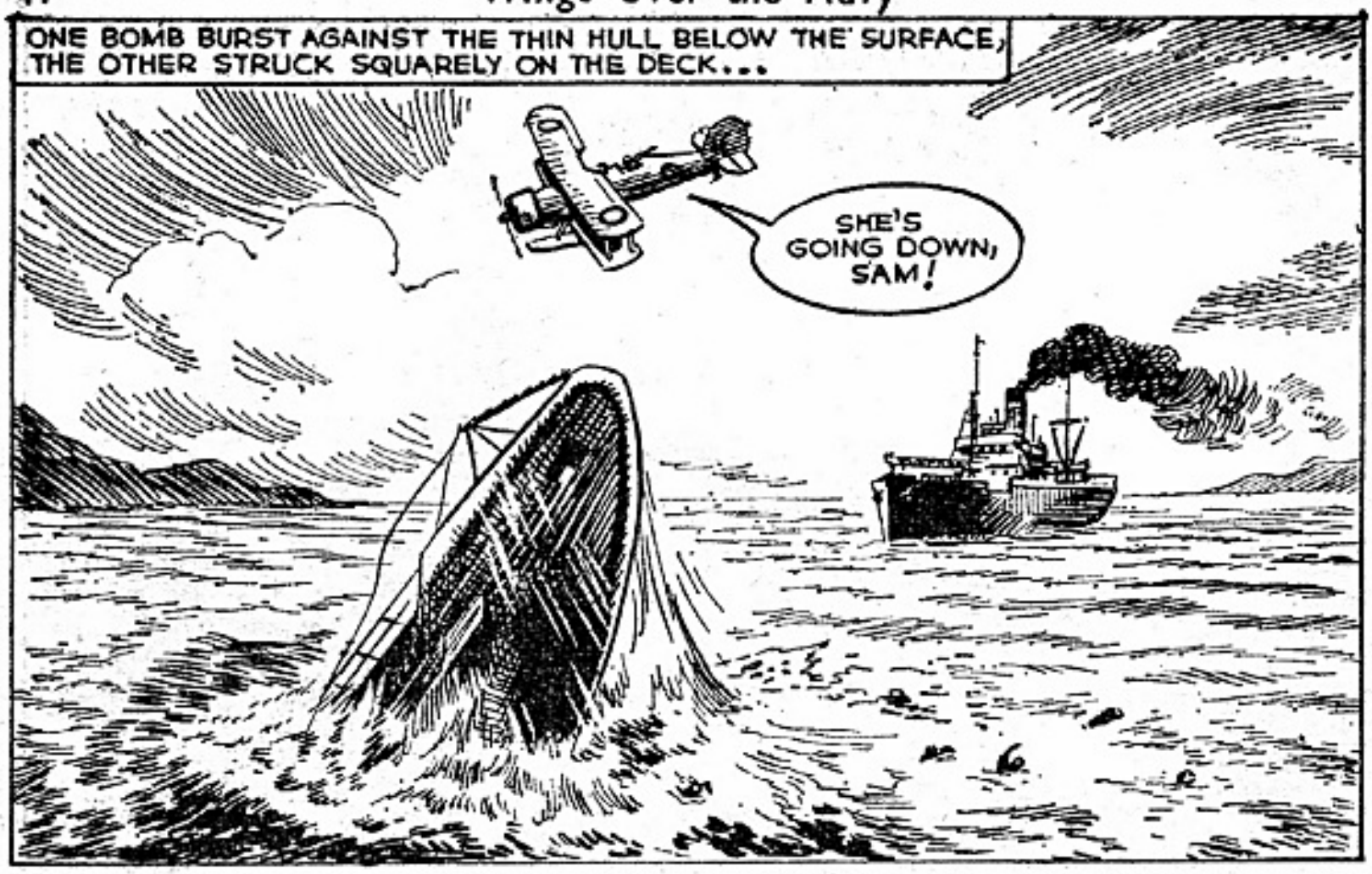

AS THE SWORDFISH BANKED, THE TROUBLED WATER BEGAN TO BOIL AGAIN . . .

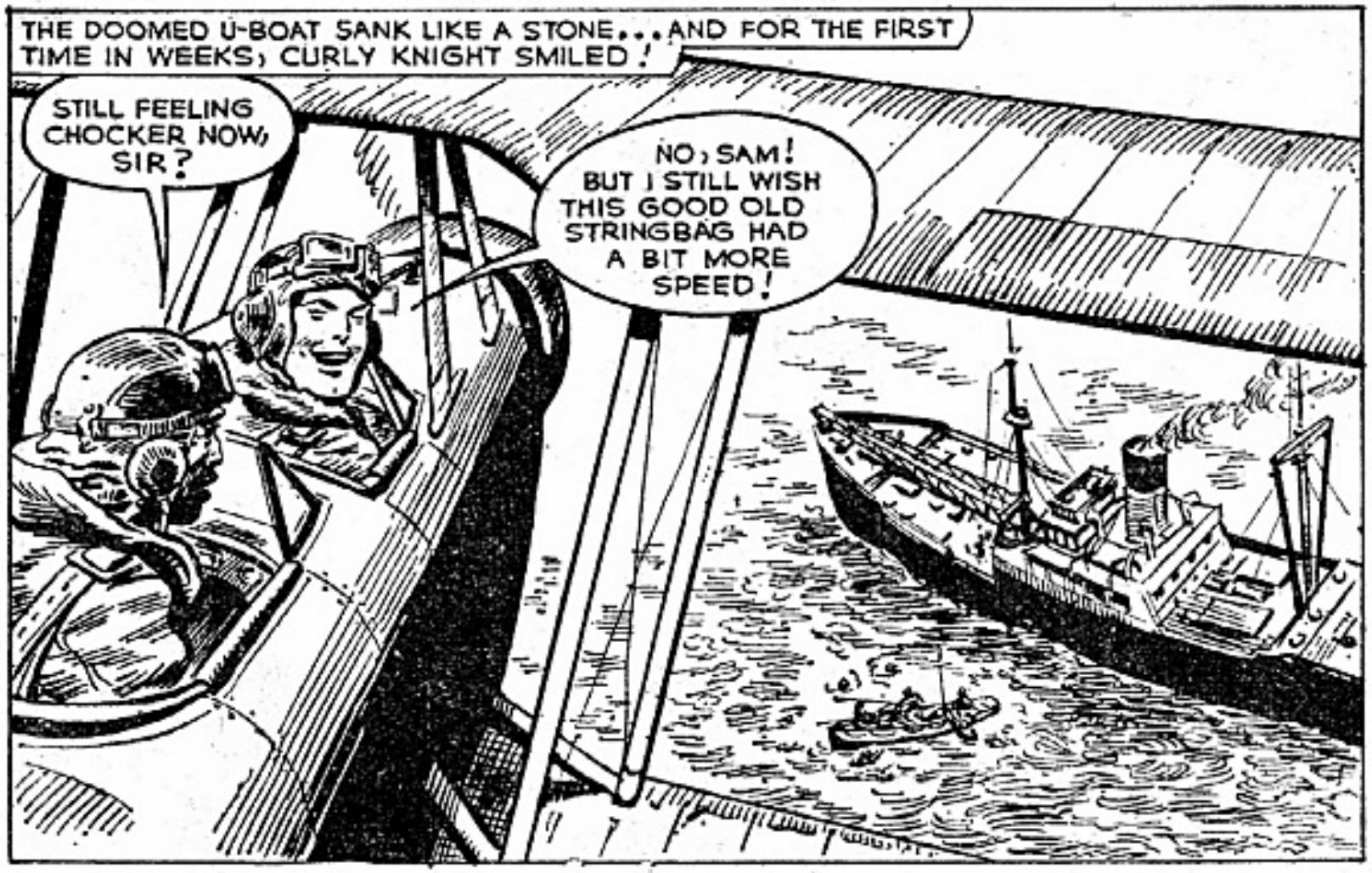

BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE BY THE SWORDFISH'S BOMBS, THE U-BOAT PREPARED TO FIGHT BACK . . .
U4
WE'VE FORCED HER UP, SAM! HERE GOES AGAIN!


THEY'RE GETTING THE RANGE, SIR!
WE'VE GOT TWO BOMBS LEFT, SAM! IT'LL BE THIS TIME OR NEVER!
U4

AGAIN THE SWORDFISH LUMBERED IN TO THE ATTACK...
AAAGH!


THIS TIME THE ENEMY WAS ON THE SURFACE, A SMALL BUT VISIBLE TARGET.


ONE BOMB BURST AGAINST THE THIN HULL BELOW THE SURFACE, THE OTHER STRUCK SQUARELY ON THE DECK...
SHE'S GOING DOWN, SAM!


THE DOOMED U-BOAT SANK LIKE A STONE...AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN WEEKS, CURLY KNIGHT SMILED!
STILL FEELING CHOCKER NOW, SIR?
NO, SAM! BUT I STILL WISH THIS GOOD OLD STRINGBAG HAD A BIT MORE SPEED!

THE GLAMIS CASTLE STEAMED UP TO THE SCENE OF ACTION...
WELL DONE, THE NAVY!

Chapter 4. DARE-DEVIL RESCUE

FOR PERHAPS THE LAST TIME, THE OLD SWORDFISH WAS CATAPULTED OFF TO HELP IN THE DESPERATE WITHDRAWAL FROM NORWAY...

PATROLLING ABOVE THE FIORD, CURLY SUDDENLY SAW A FAMILIAR SHAPE BELOW...

THERE SHE IS, SAM...THE HAWK! I WONDER WHAT THEY'RE COOKING UP FOR US NOW!

MEANWHILE, ON THE BRIDGE OF THE HAWK, FACES WERE GLOOMY...

NO SIGN OF THE R.A.F. HURRICANES, SIR! THEY SHOULD HAVE TRIED TO LAND ON TEN MINUTES AGO!

MAY I MAKE A SUGGESTION, SIR?

WHAT THE DEVIL'S HAPPENED TO THEM? I CAN'T WAIT HERE IN CALM WATERS FOR THEM ALL DAY! IF THEY'RE NOT HERE IN THIRTY MINUTES, WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE THEM BEHIND FOR THE JERRIES!

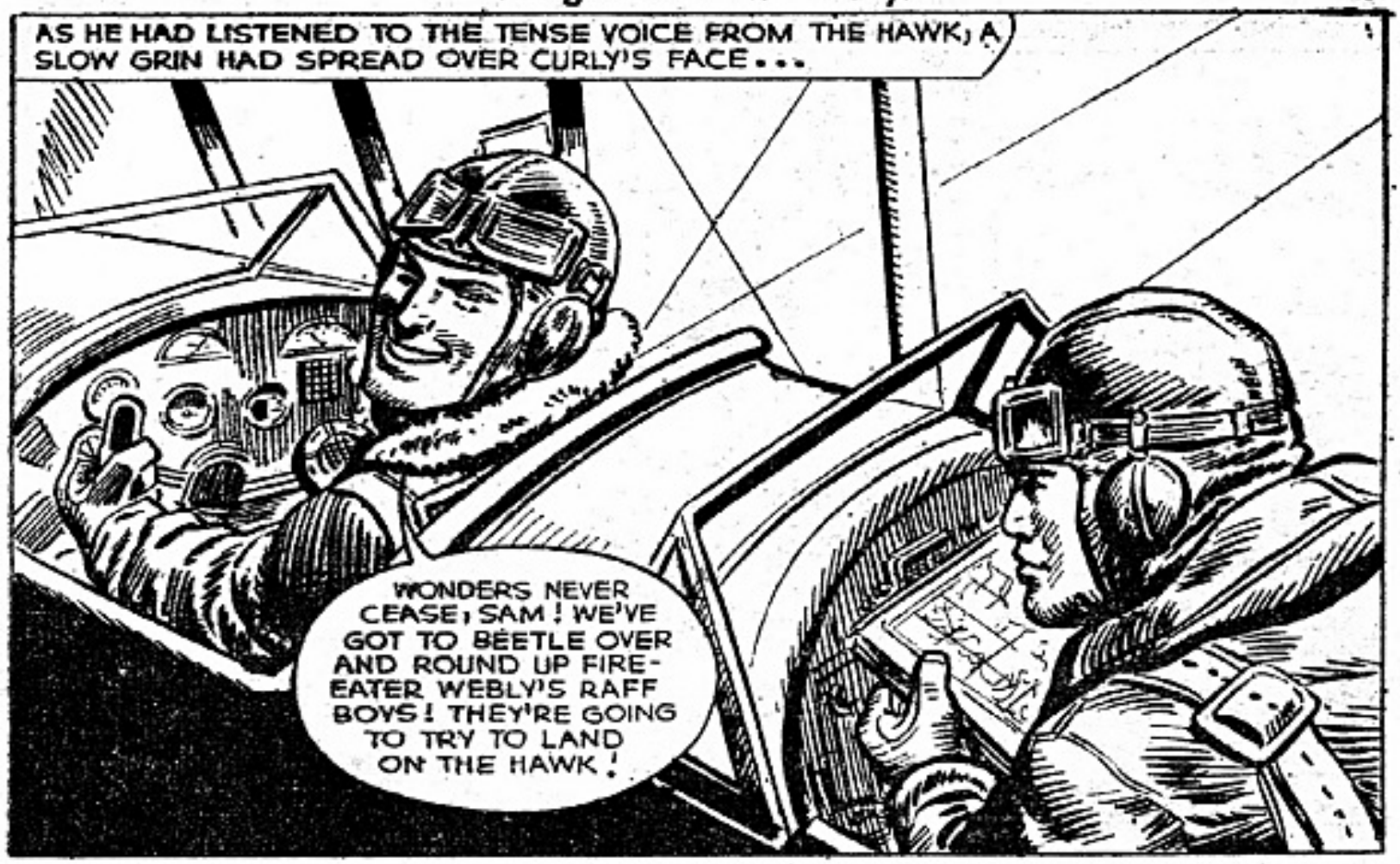
ENGLAND WAS OUT OF RANGE OF THE HURRICANE SQUADRON AT NARVIK. IN A DESPERATE EFFORT TO SAVE THEM FROM THE ADVANCING GERMANS, THEIR PILOTS HAD OFFERED TO TRY TO LAND THEM ON THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER...

COULDN'T WE SEND A SWORDFISH OVER TO THE R.A.F. AIRFIELD TO SEE WHAT'S HAPPENED, SIR? YOUNG KNIGHT'S BEEN THERE, YOU REMEMBER, AND HIS SHIP'S JUST SAILED IN! HE'S ALOFT PATROLLING NOW, AND WE COULD RADIO HIS ORDERS!

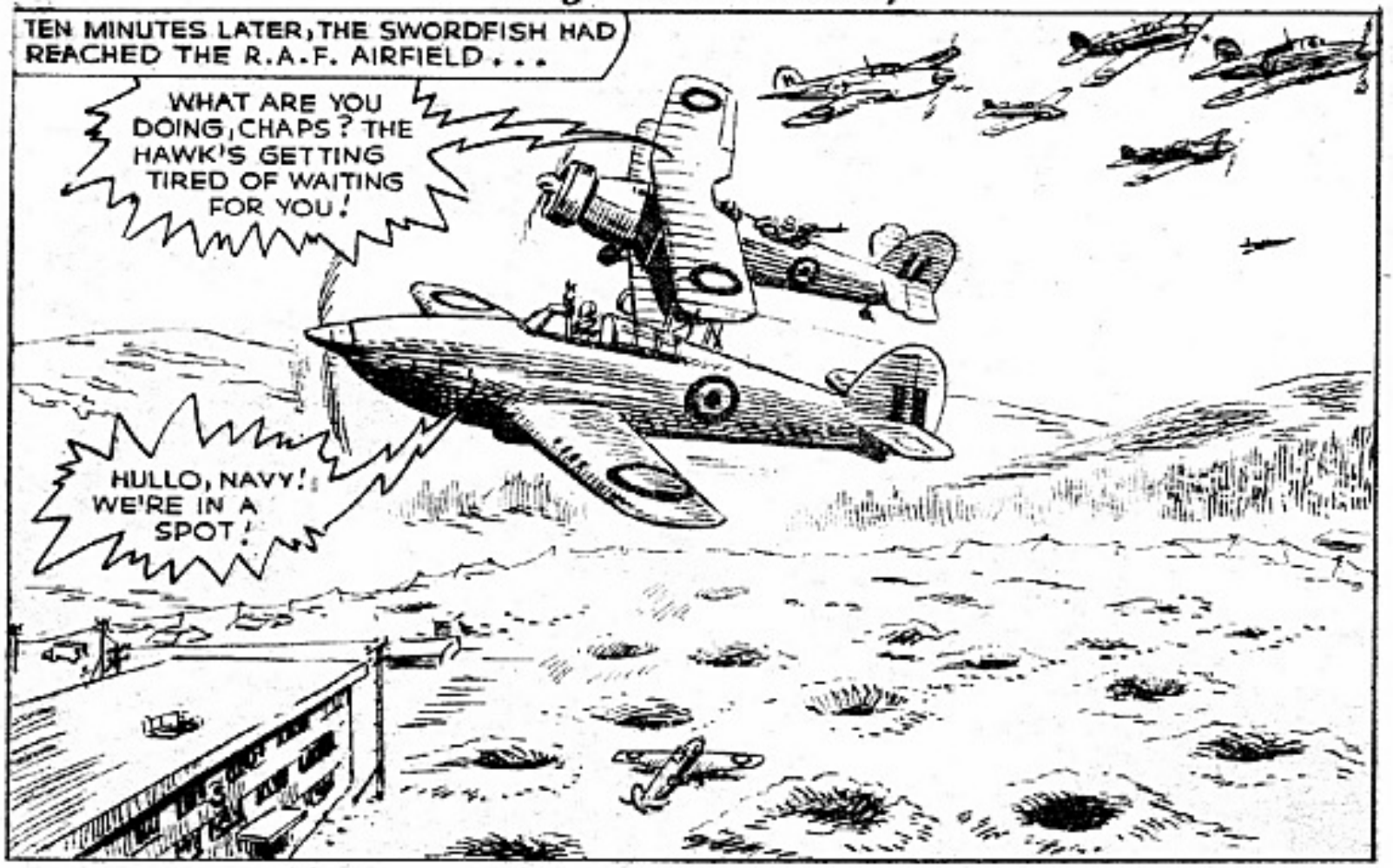
THAT YOUNG DARE-DEVIL, EH? WELL, WHY NOT? AND TELL HIM TO BRING BACK THOSE HURRICANES, OR ELSE...

AN URGENT MESSAGE WENT OUT TO THE SWORDFISH OF LIEUTENANT CURLY KNIGHT, OVERHEAD.

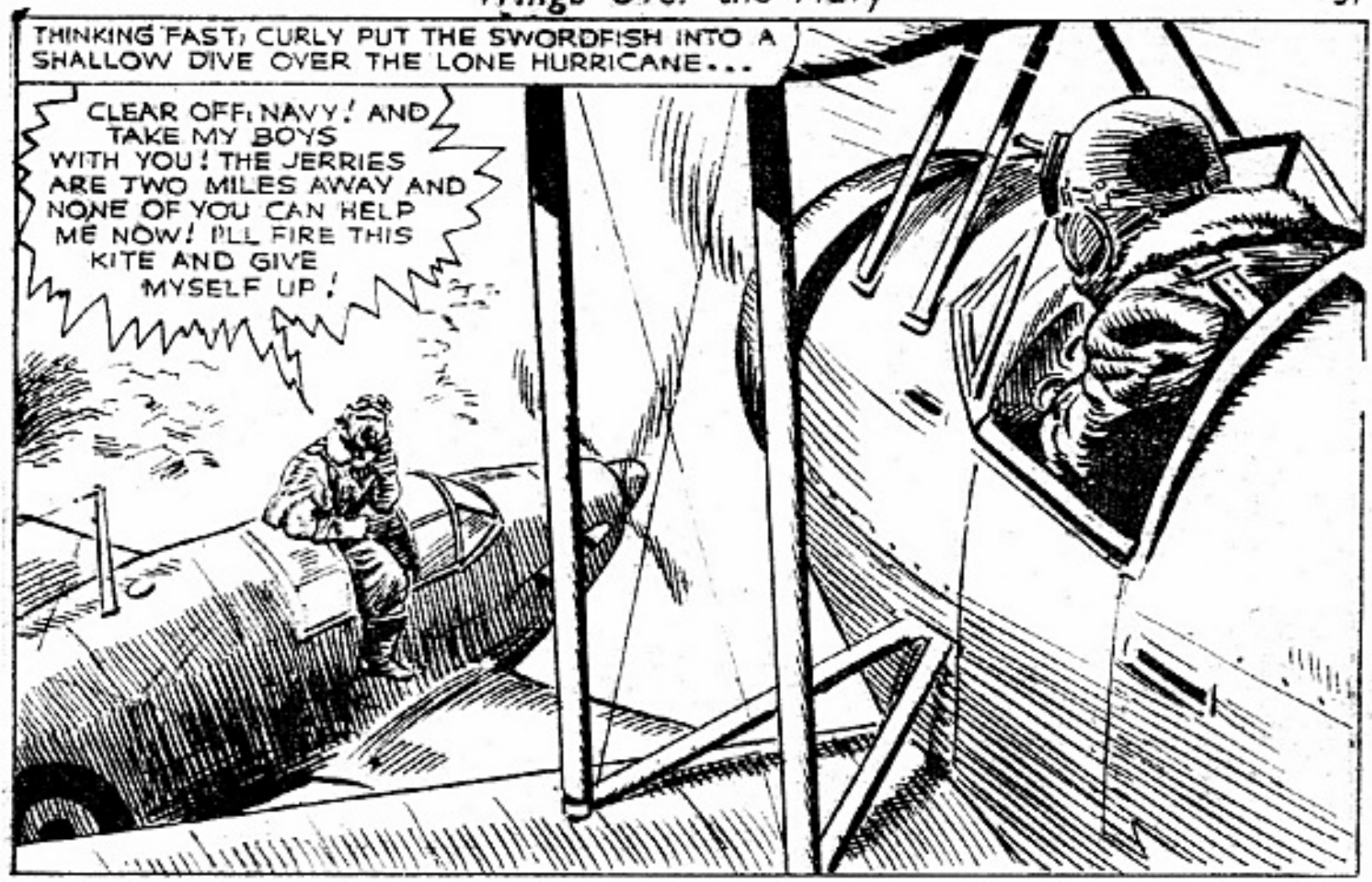
YOUR MESSAGE UNDERSTOOD, HAWK CONTROL! WILCO! OUT!

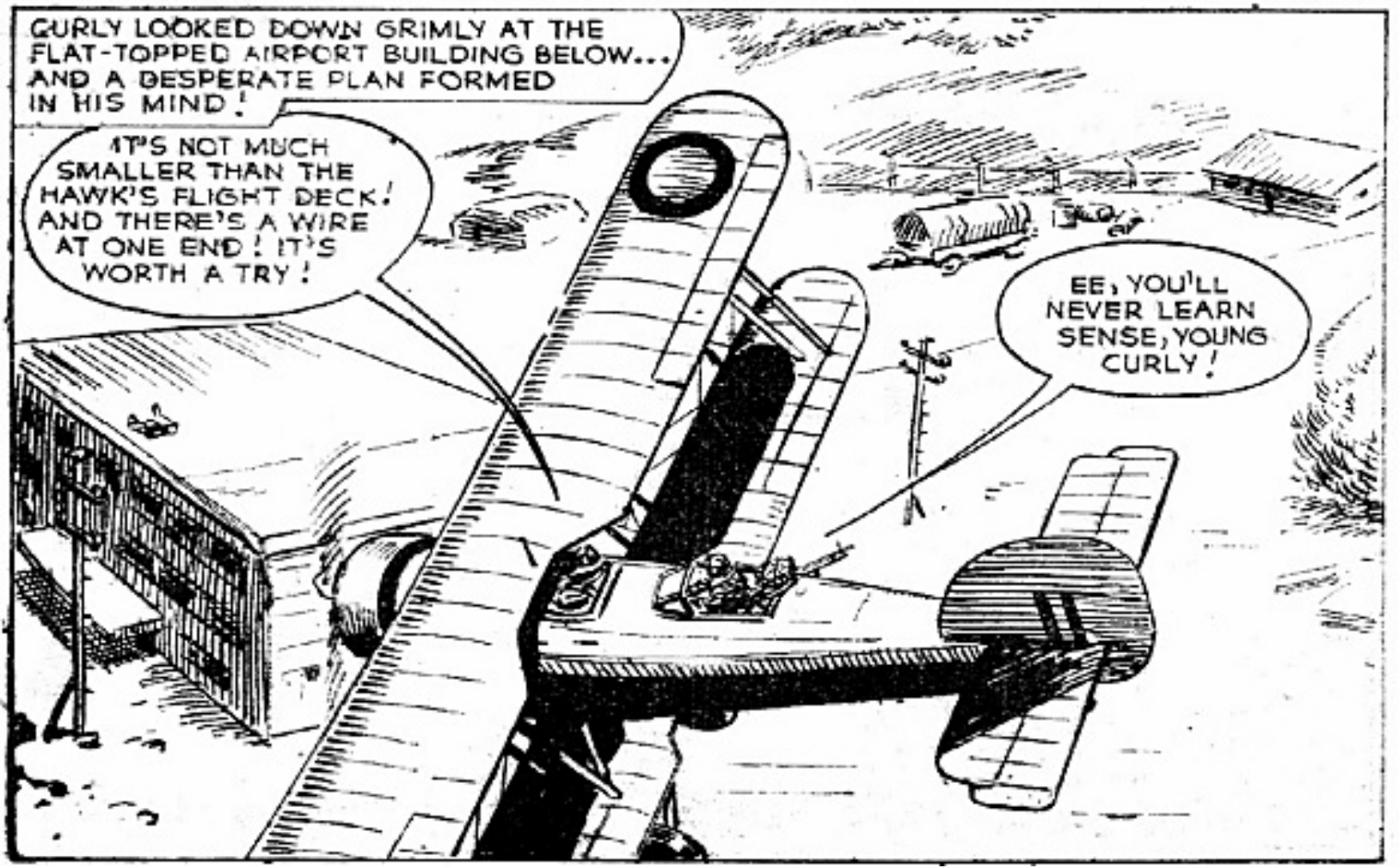

AS HE HAD LISTENED TO THE TENSE VOICE FROM THE HAWK, A SLOW GRIN HAD SPREAD OVER CURLY'S FACE...
WONDERS NEVER CEASE, SAM! WE'VE GOT TO BEETLE OVER AND ROUND UP FIRE-EATER WEBLY'S RAFF BOYS! THEY'RE GOING TO TRY TO LAND ON THE HAWK!

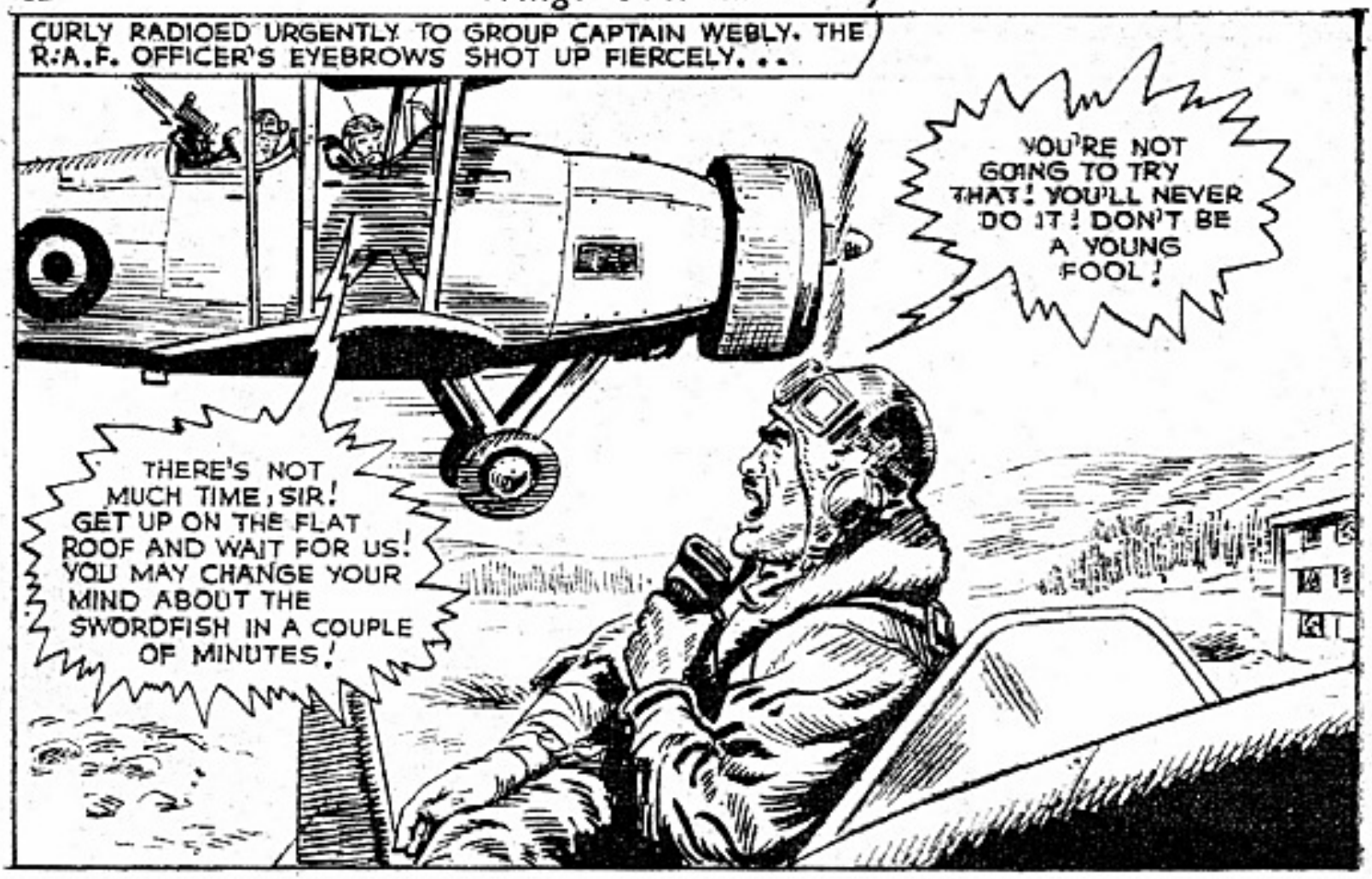
NOW THE R.A.F. WAS IN TROUBLE... AND THE NAVY WAS FLYING TO THE RESCUE!
THERE THEY ARE, STOOGING ABOUT OVER THE AIRFIELD! WE'LL GIVE THEM A CALL AND FIND OUT WHAT'S WRONG!

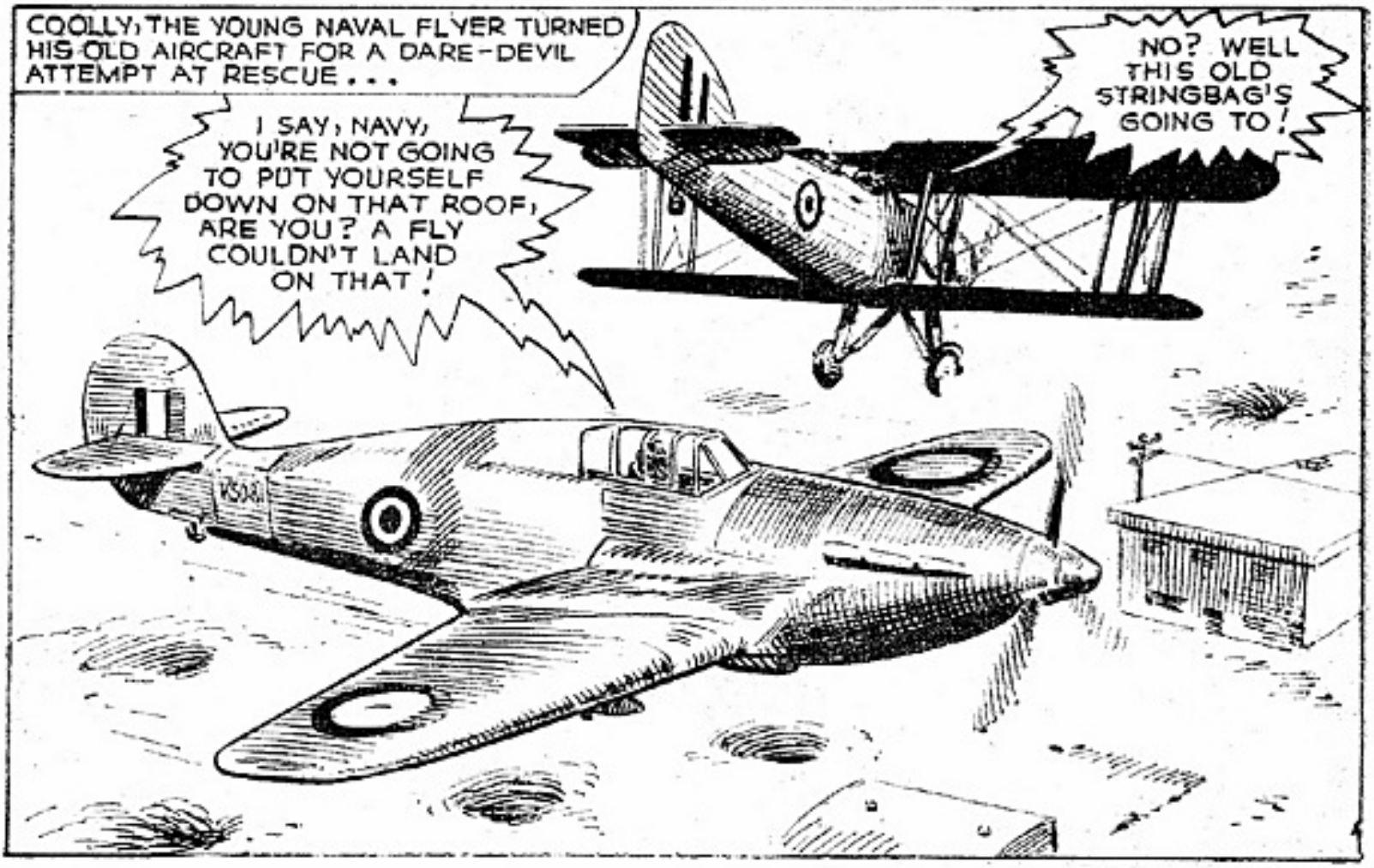

TEN MINUTES LATER, THE SWORDFISH HAD REACHED THE R.A.F. AIRFIELD . . .
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, CHAPS? THE HAWK'S GETTING TIRED OF WAITING FOR YOU!
HULLO, NAVY! WE'RE IN A SPOT!

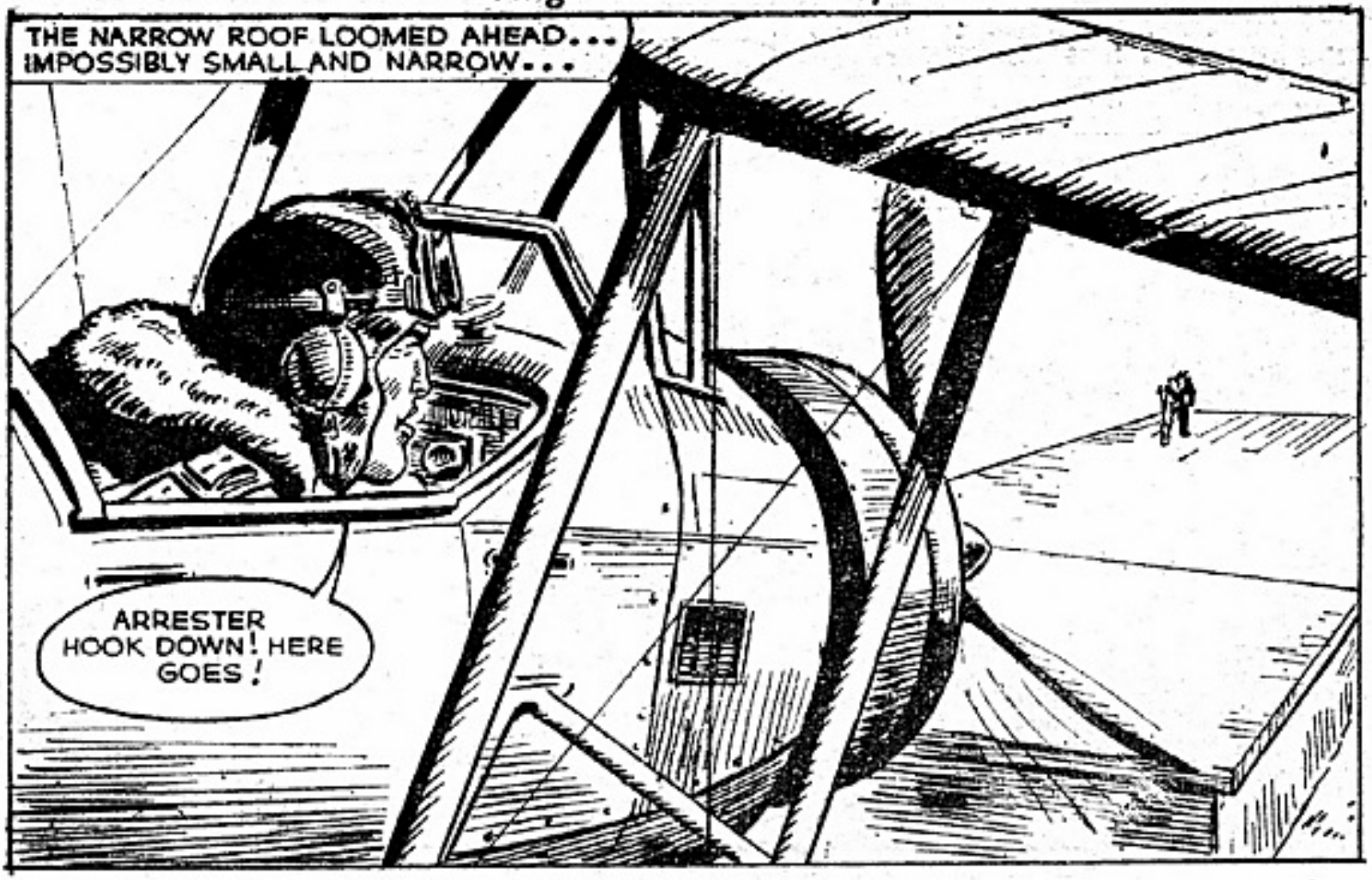
THE SQUADRON LEADER'S VOICE WAS AGONIZED.
JUST AS THE SQUADRON TOOK OFF, THE JERRIES STRAFED THE AIRFIELD! EVERYONE GOT OFF EXCEPT THE C.O.! HIS PLANE'S ALL RIGHT BUT HE STOPPED A BULLET IN HIS ARM AND HE CAN'T HANDLE IT! HE'S ALONE DOWN THERE! WE CAN'T LAND AMONG THOSE BOMB CRATERS... AND WE CAN'T LEAVE HIM BEHIND!

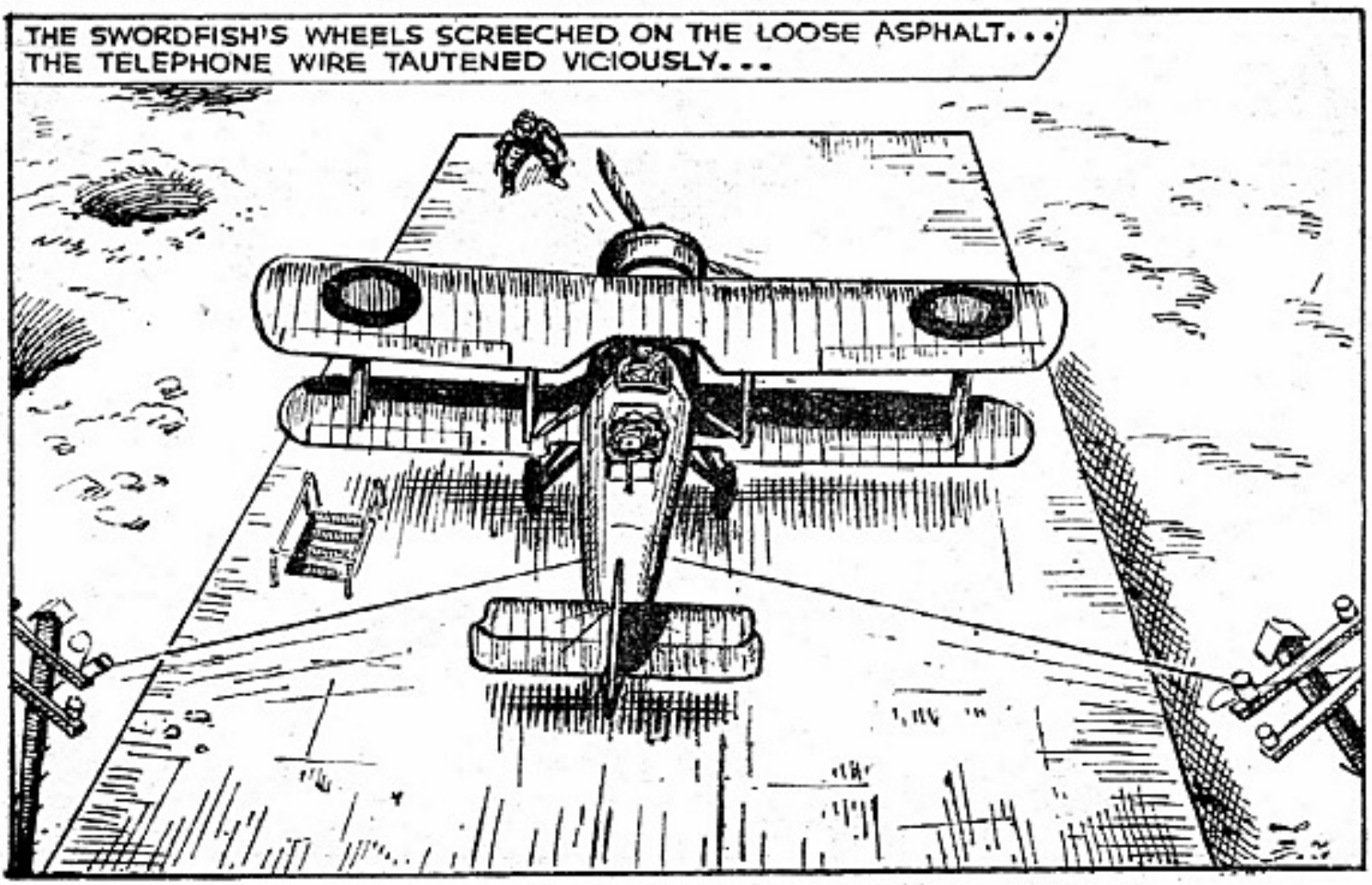

THINKING FAST, CURLY PUT THE SWORDFISH INTO A SHALLOW DIVE OVER THE LONE HURRICANE...
CLEAR OFF, NAVY! AND TAKE MY BOYS WITH YOU! THE JERRIES ARE TWO MILES AWAY AND NONE OF YOU CAN HELP ME NOW! I'LL FIRE THIS KITE AND GIVE MYSELF UP!

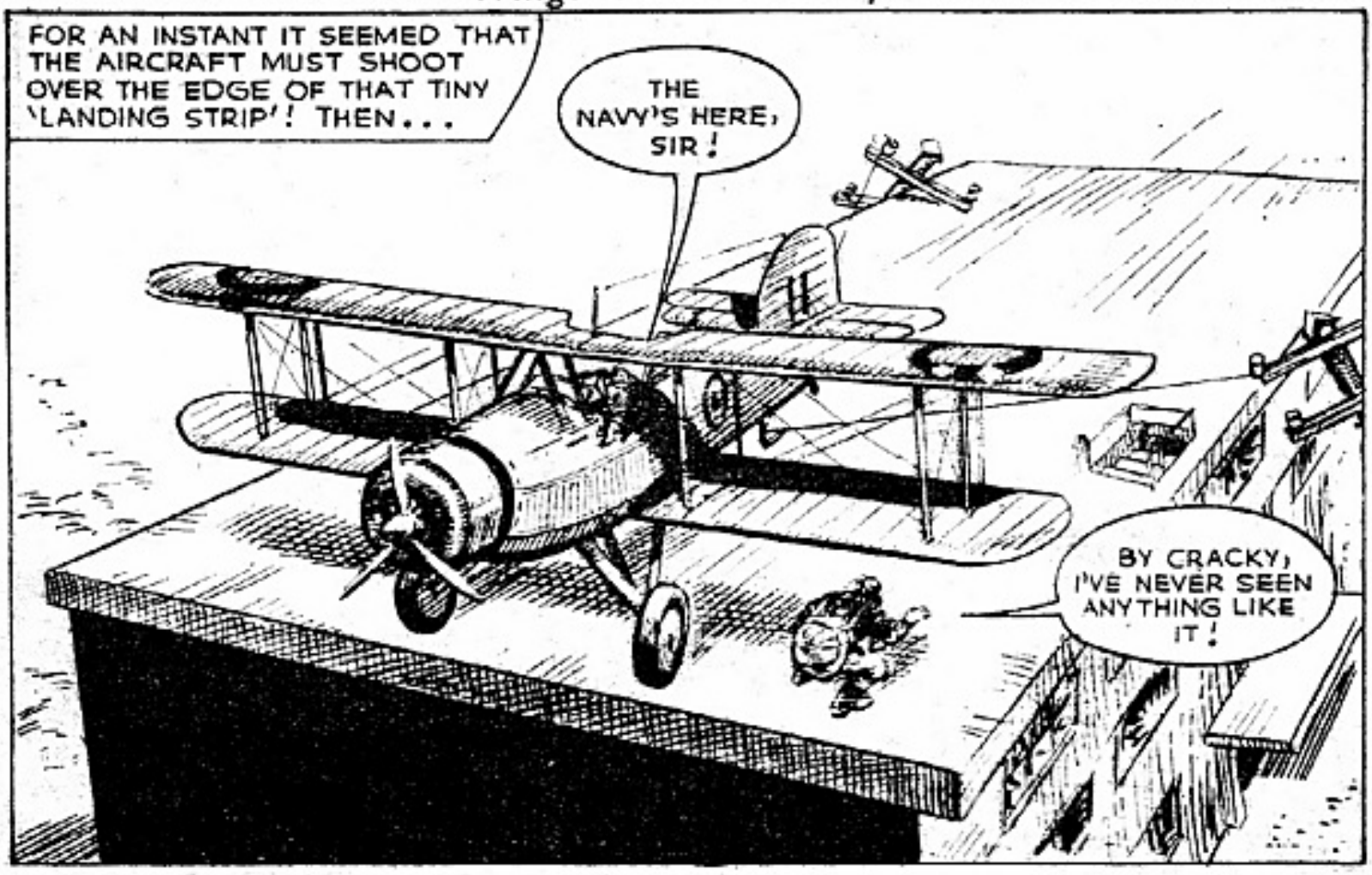

CURLY LOOKED DOWN GRIMLY AT THE FLAT-TOPPED AIRPORT BUILDING BELOW... AND A DESPERATE PLAN FORMED IN HIS MIND!
IT'S NOT MUCH SMALLER THAN THE HAWK'S FLIGHT DECK! AND THERE'S A WIRE AT ONE END! IT'S WORTH A TRY!
EE, YOU'LL NEVER LEARN SENSE, YOUNG CURLY!


CURLY RADIOED URGENTLY TO GROUP CAPTAIN WEBLY. THE R.A.F. OFFICER'S EYEBROWS SHOT UP FIERCELY...
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TRY THAT! YOU'LL NEVER DO IT! DON'T BE A YOUNG FOOL!
THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME, SIR! GET UP ON THE FLAT ROOF AND WAIT FOR US! YOU MAY CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT THE SWORDFISH IN A COUPLE OF MINUTES!

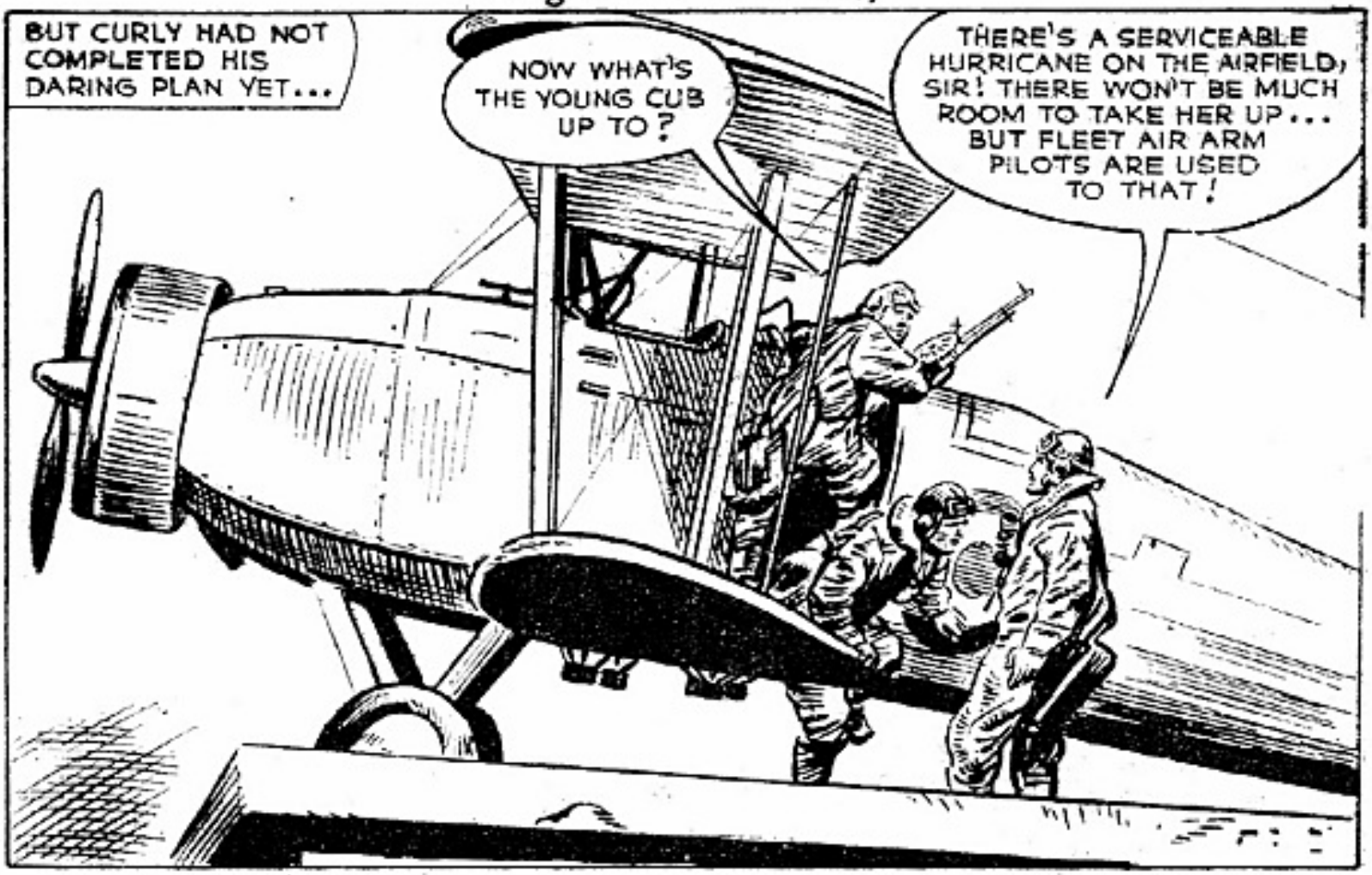

COOLLY, THE YOUNG NAVAL FLYER TURNED HIS OLD AIRCRAFT FOR A DARE-DEVIL ATTEMPT AT RESCUE...
I SAY, NAVY, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO PUT YOURSELF DOWN ON THAT ROOF, ARE YOU? A FLY COULDN'T LAND ON THAT!
NO? WELL THIS OLD STRINGBAG'S GOING TO!


THE NARROW ROOF LOOMED AHEAD... IMPOSSIBLY SMALL AND NARROW...
ARRESTER HOOK DOWN! HERE GOES!


THE SWORDFISH'S WHEELS SCREECHED ON THE LOOSE ASPHALT... THE TELEPHONE WIRE TAUTENED VICIOUSLY...

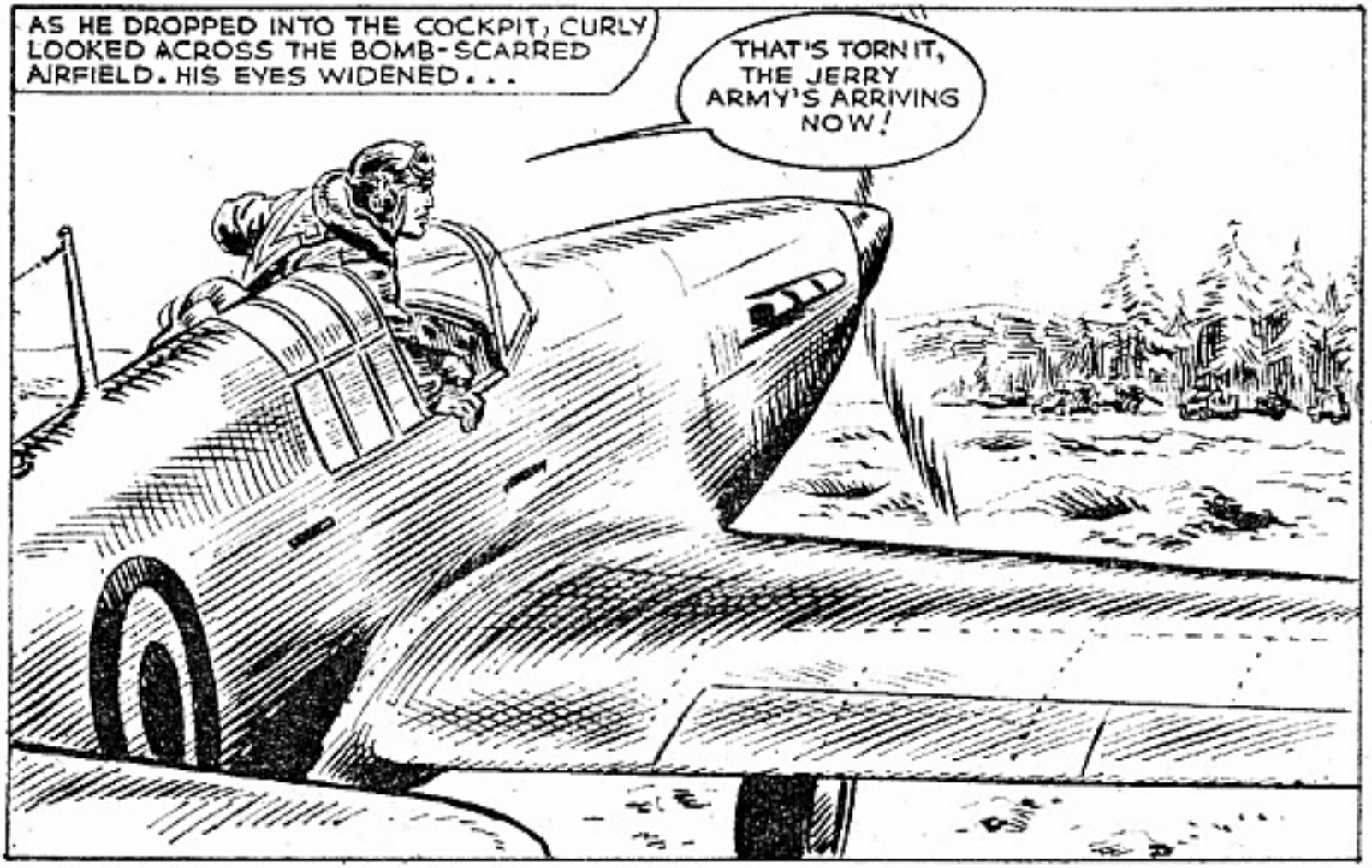

FOR AN INSTANT IT SEEMED THAT THE AIRCRAFT MUST SHOOT OVER THE EDGE OF THAT TINY 'LANDING STRIP'! THEN...
THE NAVY'S HERE, SIR!
BY CRACKY, I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT!

GROUP CAPTAIN WEBLY'S GRIN HAD A CERTAIN RESPECT IN IT AS HE LOOKED UP AT CURLY...
SO IT'S YOU! WELL, I TAKE BACK ALL I SAID! NO OTHER PLANE IN THE WORLD COULD HAVE COME DOWN LIKE THIS... AND NOT MANY OTHER PILOTS, EITHER!
THANKS, SIR! NOW COME ABOARD IN THE REAR COCKPIT! SAM, YOU TAKE MY PLACE AT THE CONTROLS WHEN WE'VE TURNED THE STRINGBAG FOR A TAKE-OFF!

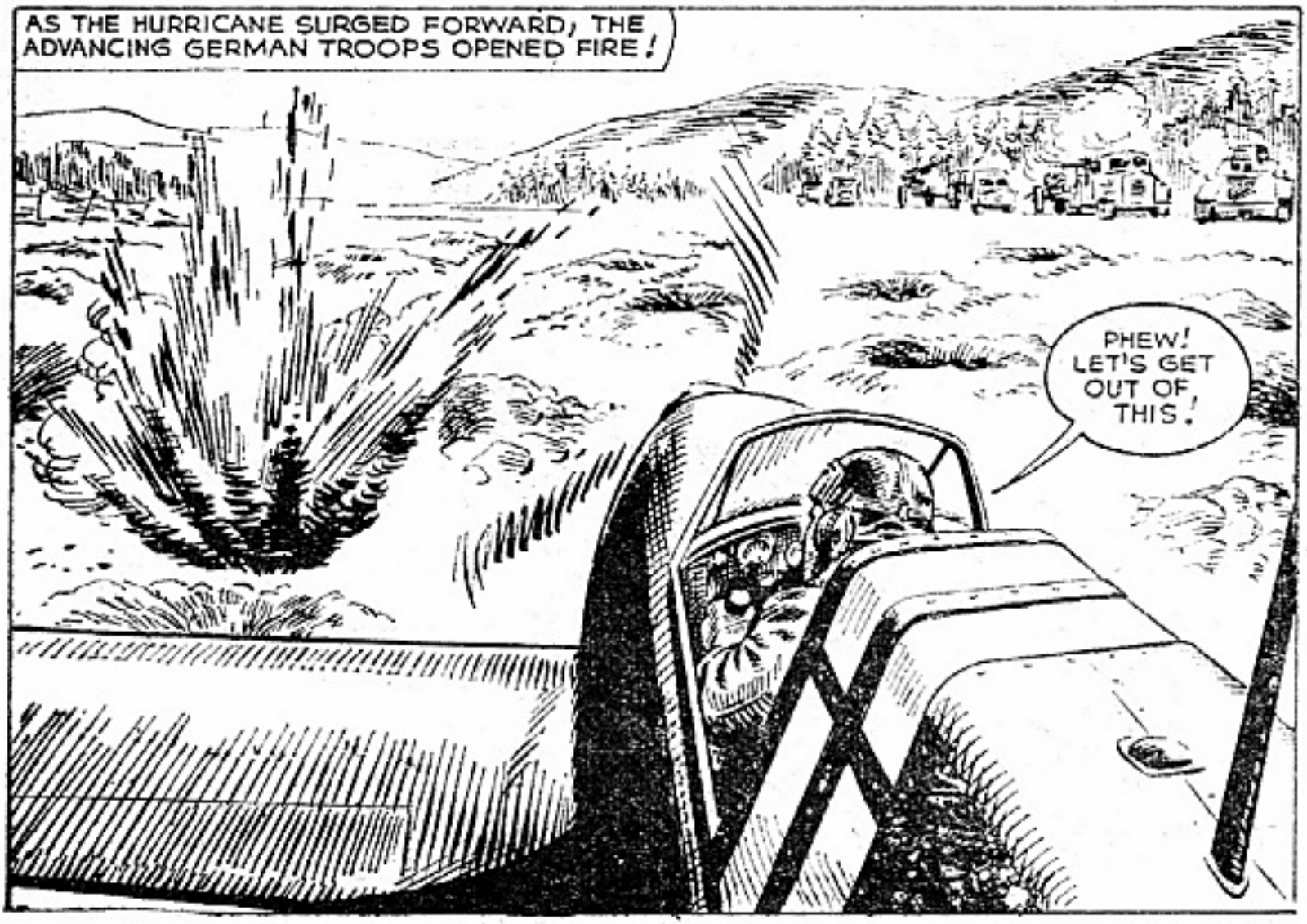

BUT CURLY HAD NOT COMPLETED HIS DARING PLAN YET...
NOW WHAT'S THE YOUNG CUB UP TO?
THERE'S A SERVICEABLE HURRICANE ON THE AIRFIELD, SIR! THERE WON'T BE MUCH ROOM TO TAKE HER UP... BUT FLEET AIR ARM PILOTS ARE USED TO THAT!

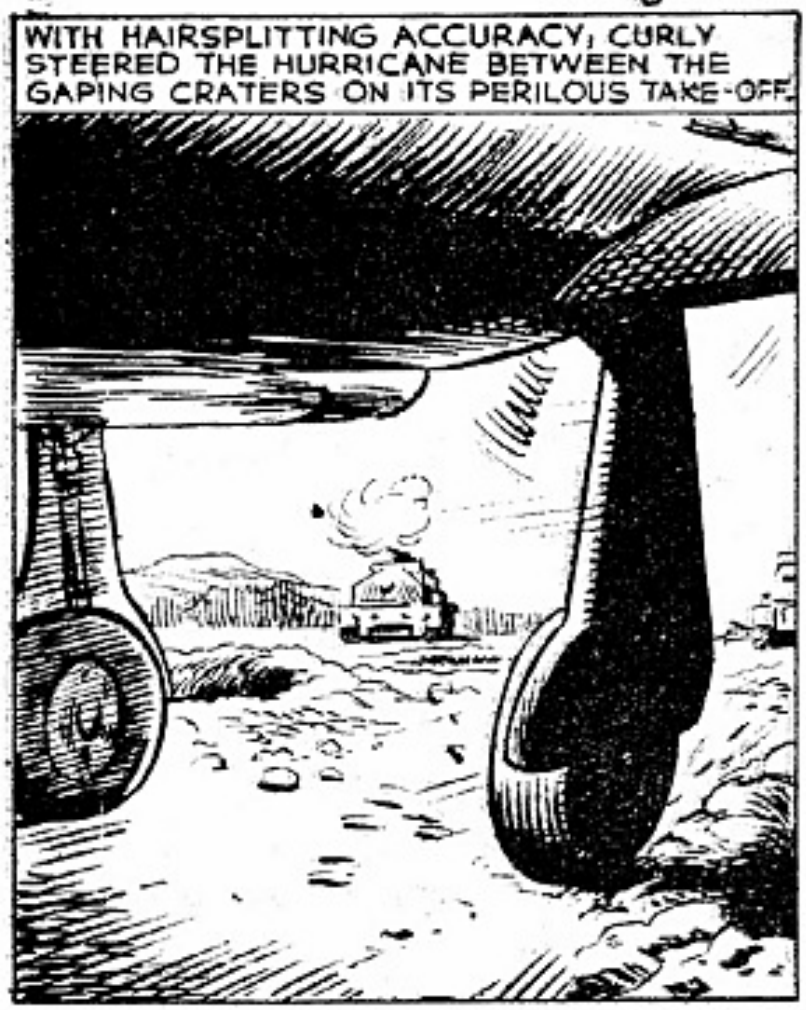
THE R.A.F. OFFICER SHOOK HIS HEAD IN RELUCTANT WONDER...
THAT YOUNG TROUBLE-SHOOTER WILL DO IT, TOO, IF ONLY TO MAKE ME EAT MY WORDS!
FLY THE GROUP CAPTAIN BACK TO THE HAWK, SAM! AND I HOPE FOR HIS SAKE YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN THOSE LESSONS I GAVE YOU AT LEITH!

HIS HEART BEATING, CURLY RAN OUT TO THE HURRICANE...
HERE I GO, STICKING MY NECK OUT AGAIN!

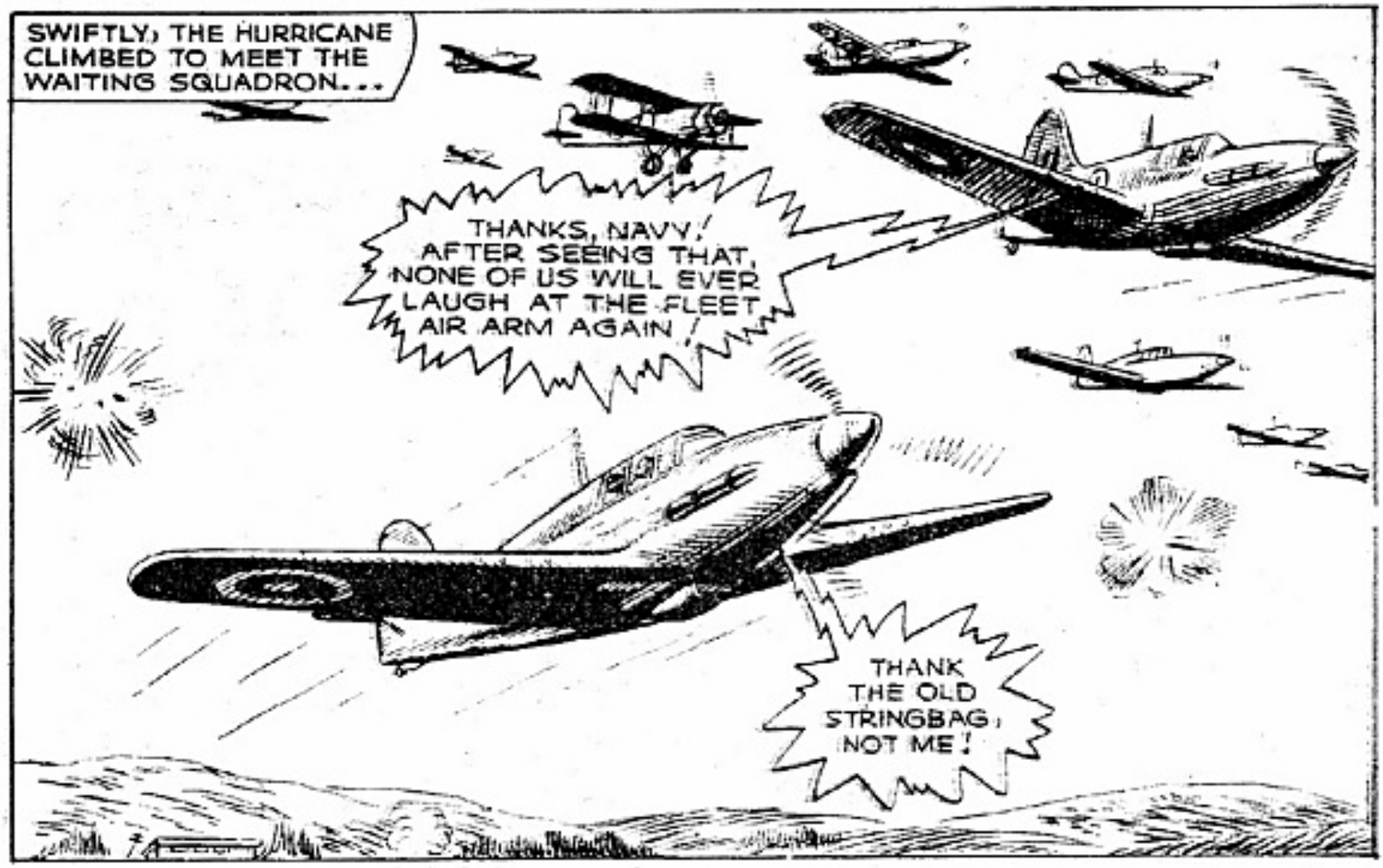

AS HE DROPPED INTO THE COCKPIT, CURLY LOOKED ACROSS THE BOMB-SCARRED AIRFIELD. HIS EYES WIDENED...
THAT'S TORN IT, THE JERRY ARMY'S ARRIVING NOW!

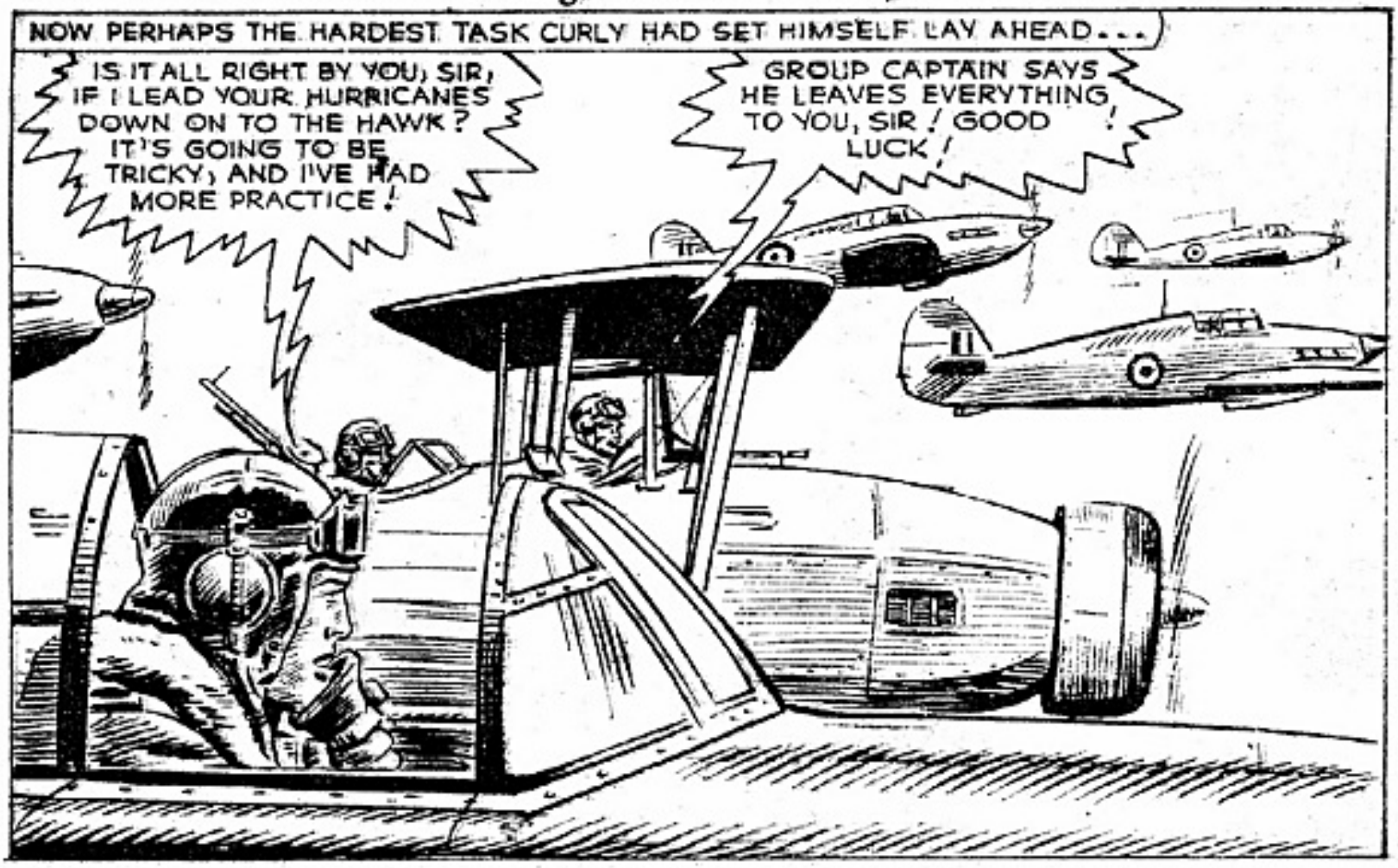
THE SITUATION WAS DESPERATE... BUT AT LEAST THE GROUP CAPTAIN WAS SAFE...
WELL, THERE GOES SAM AND THE FIRE-EATER! NOW FOR YOU, CURLY MY BOY!


AS THE HURRICANE SURGED FORWARD, THE ADVANCING GERMAN TROOPS OPENED FIRE!
PHEW! LET'S GET OUT OF THIS!

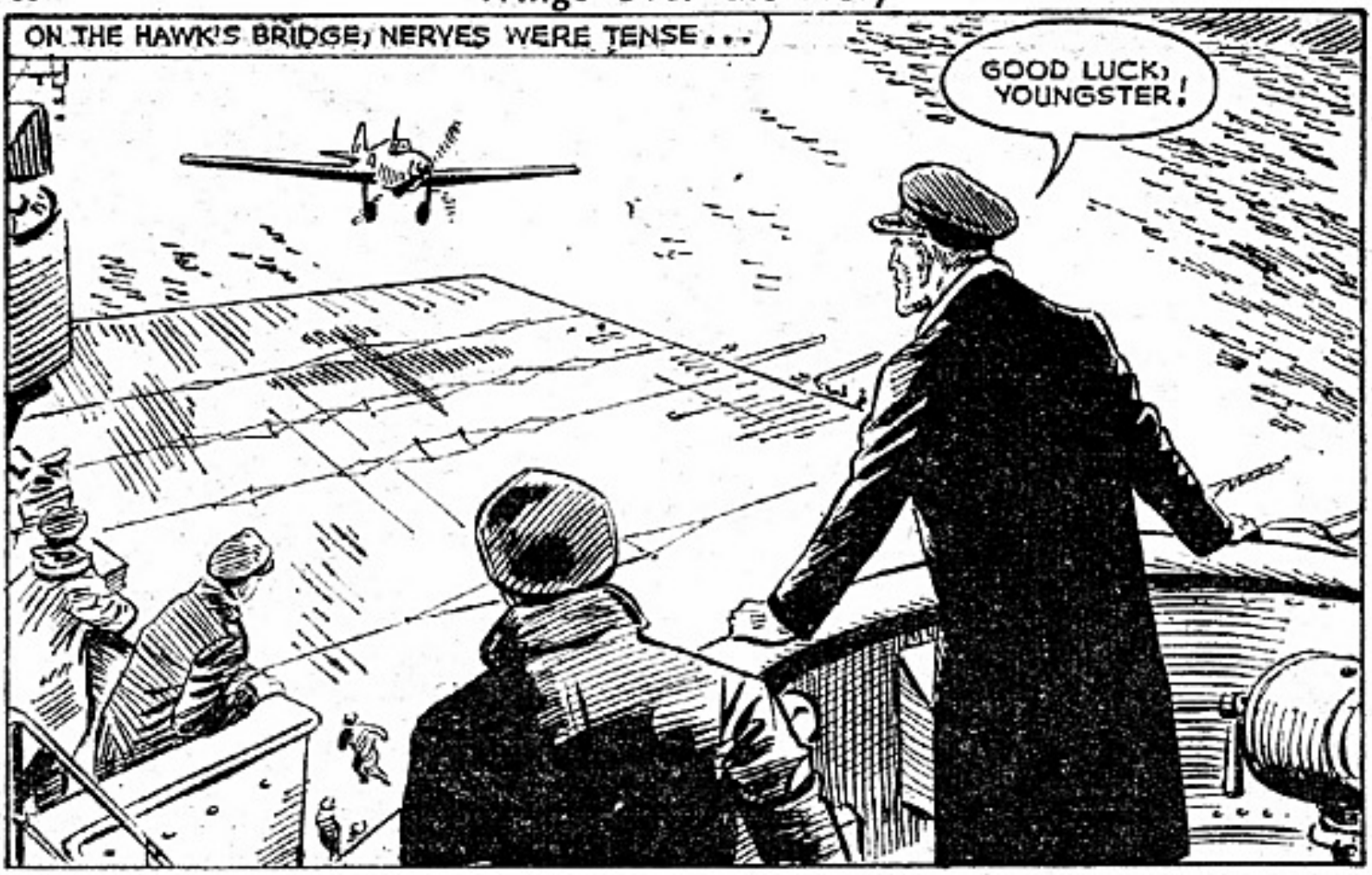

WITH HAIRSPLITTING ACCURACY, CURLY STEERED THE HURRICANE BETWEEN THE GAPING CRATERS ON ITS PERILOUS TAKE-OFF.

AT THE LAST MOMENT, CURLY WRENCHED HARD BACK ON THE CONTROLS...
AAACH!

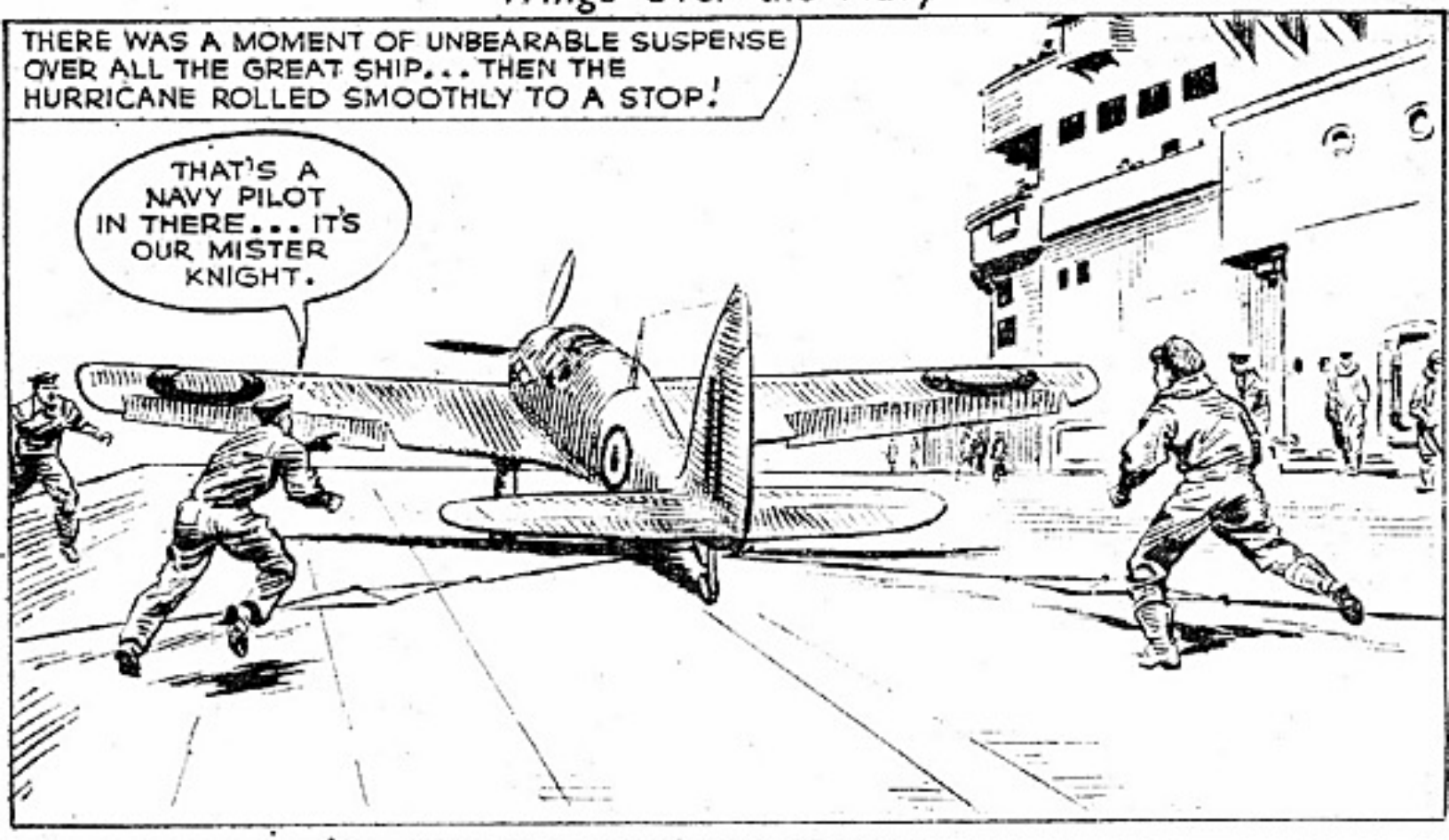

SWIFTLY, THE HURRICANE CLIMBED TO MEET THE WAITING SQUADRON...
THANKS, NAVY! AFTER SEEING THAT, NONE OF US WILL EVER LAUGH AT THE FLEET AIR ARM AGAIN!
THANK THE OLD STRINGBAG, NOT ME!


NOW PERHAPS THE HARDEST TASK CURLY HAD SET HIMSELF LAY AHEAD...
IS IT ALL RIGHT BY YOU, SIR, IF I LEAD YOUR HURRICANES DOWN ON TO THE HAWK? IT'S GOING TO BE TRICKY, AND I'VE HAD MORE PRACTICE!
GROUP CAPTAIN SAYS HE LEAVES EVERYTHING TO YOU, SIR! GOOD LUCK!

THE HURRICANES HAD BEEN FITTED WITH MAKESHIFT ARRESTER HOOKS... BUT NO FIGHTER PLANE OF THIS SPEED HAD LANDED ON A CARRIER BEFORE...
PERMISSION TO LAND ON, HAWK CONTROL! OVER!
COME ON IN, HURRICANE! AND MIND OUR DECK!


ON THE HAWK'S BRIDGE, NERVES WERE TENSE...
GOOD LUCK, YOUNGSTER!

THE NARROW FLIGHT DECK LOOMED UP BEFORE CURLY'S EYES, BLURRED BY THE HURRICANE'S SPEED...


THERE WAS A MOMENT OF UNBEARABLE SUSPENSE OVER ALL THE GREAT SHIP... THEN THE HURRICANE ROLLED SMOOTHLY TO A STOP!
THAT'S A NAVY PILOT IN THERE... IT'S OUR MISTER KNIGHT.

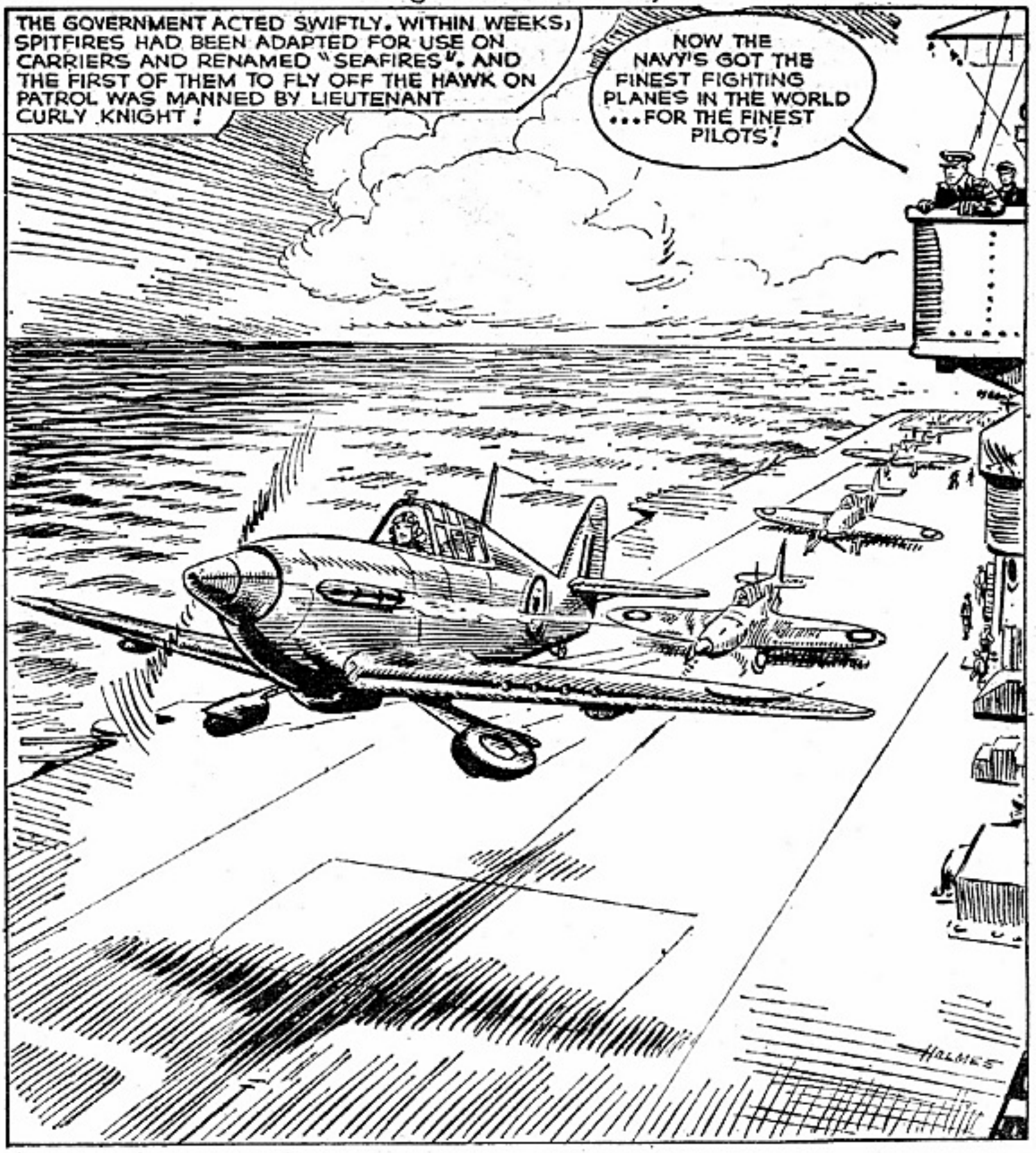
WAITING TO GREET CURLY WAS HIS OLD FRIEND LIEUTENANT PETERS...
WELCOME BACK, CURLY! OLD WEBLY RADIOED US ABOUT YOU! THEY WANT YOU ON THE BRIDGE!
LET'S HOPE IT'S NOT A ROCKET FOR ME THIS TIME!

AS HE CLIMBED TO THE BRIDGE, CURLY SAW THE OLD SWORDFISH COMING IN SEDATELY TO LAND ON . . .
GOOD OLD SAM! HE'S MADE IT!

ON THE BRIDGE, THE CAPTAIN OF THE HAWK PUT OUT HIS HAND TO THE YOUNG PILOT...
YOU KNOW WHAT WE ALL FEEL ABOUT THIS PIECE OF WORK, MISTER KNIGHT! PERSONALLY I'M JUST GOING TO THANK YOU FOR SHOWING GROUP CAPTAIN WEBLY WHAT THE FLEET AIR ARM CAN DO! YOU'RE STAYING ON THE HAWK FROM NOW ON!
THANK YOU, SIR!

AT THAT MOMENT, A STOCKY AND PUGNACIOUS FIGURE STEPPED ON TO THE BRIDGE... AND GRINNED!
ALL RIGHT, SAY IT, CAPTAIN! I DESERVE EVERY WORD OF IT! THIS YOUNG MAN HAS TAUGHT ME A LESSON!
I WAS ONLY GOING TO CONGRATULATE YOUR PILOTS ON PUTTING THEIR HURRICANES DOWN ON MY DECK SUCCESSFULLY, GROUP CAPTAIN. A FINE PERFORMANCE!

AS THE LAST HURRICANE CAME IN SAFELY TO LAND ON...
WELL, THIS PROVES THAT FAST FIGHTER PLANES CAN OPERATE FROM CARRIERS, MISTER WEBLY!
IT CERTAINLY DOES, CAPTAIN, AND I'M REPORTING THAT TO THE AIR MINISTRY! FLYERS LIKE THAT YOUNGSTER WHO RESCUED ME DESERVE THE BEST AIRCRAFT WE CAN GIVE THEM!



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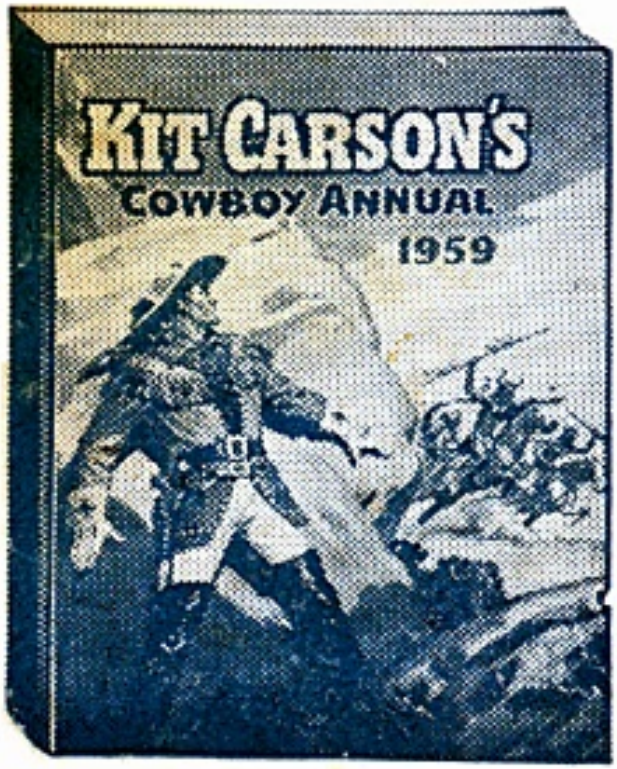

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